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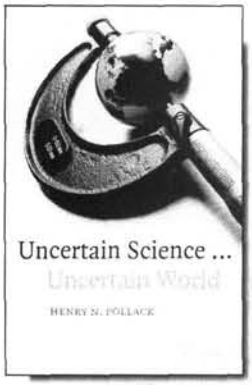

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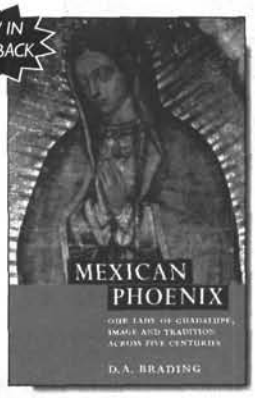

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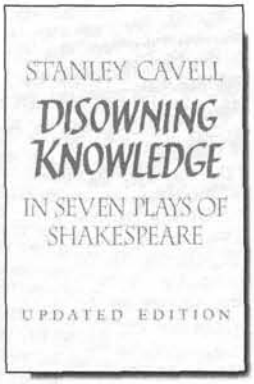

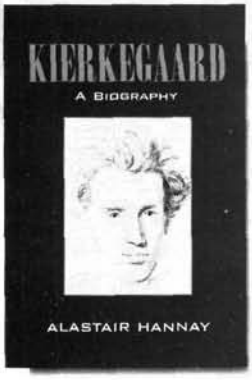

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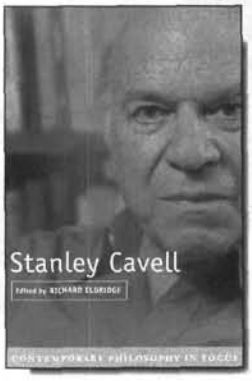

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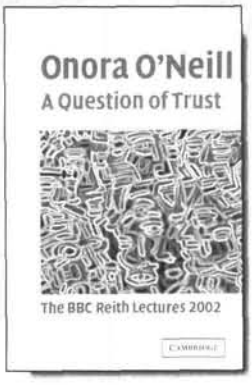

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CORRESPONDENCE

JUDGE NOT

THE EDITORIAL "HYPERACTIVE" renews THE NEW REPUBLIC's effort to squash Judge Charles Pickering's appointment to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals (January 27). While exonerating Pickering from the "racist" charge pinned on him last year, this latest argument is based upon the editors' assessment that he is a "shoddy judge."

Unfortunately, the basis for this conclusion is little more than a rehash of Pickering's handling of the sentencing of Daniel Swan. TNR's cavalier suggestion that the "good reason" to let Swan's 17-year-old partner in crime go free was his age is extremely shortsighted. If this decision was made by local federal prosecutors, one would expect TNR to voice indignation that the perpetrator of such a heinous crime could be set free. If, on the other hand, the decision was made by the Civil Rights Division in Washington, is it not fair to ask why the Justice Department had so little concern for the victims of this monstrous act? More significantly, why does TNR not ask?

The only person whose actions reflected any concern for the victims of this cross-burning is Pickering. His remarks at Swan's sentencing indicate not only a revulsion for the crime but an intention to use Swan as an example. One hopes that 27 months in prison will deter him from behaving in such a criminally stupid way in the future and that others will be similarly deterred. Pickering may not be a good candidate for elevation to the circuit court, but TNR's editorial is less than convincing.

GEORGE E. CLARK JR.
Scranton, Pennsylvania

TWO-FACED

IN HIS LATEST BOOK REVIEW, Jackson Lears tosses dead cats onto the perfumed altars that have been raised to worship H.L. Mencken ("The Sophomore," January 27). Along the way, he draws a cartoon of Mencken as a champion of a master race of German aristocrats and an ignorer of modern art. That's a shallow evaluation. Missing is the Mencken who was the first major editor to publish James Joyce in the United States; one of the first translators to bring Friedrich Nietzsche's writings to our country's attention; and, most importantly of all, the first editor to create a magazine that rattled the conventional wisdom in a snarky voice, which is a pose one would think that Lears and TNR could appreciate.

SEAN O'NEILL
Washington, D.C.

LONG DIVISION

ANOTHER PROBLEM WITH REALIGNment theory, even apart from its numerological roots, is that it assumes that the most important thing in politics is the party affiliation of the president and the congressional majorities ("Turn, Turn, Turn," by Alan Ehrenhalt, January 27). But, to paraphrase Lord Palmerston, party affiliations aren't eternal, interests are. U.S. history is filled with liberal/conservative splits that transcend party lines. Thus, the alleged realignment of 1896 broke up by 1912, as progressive Republicans and Democrats joined forces in Congress against their conservative opponents and kept control until 1918. And Franklin Roosevelt's fabled realignment of 1932 ran out of gas by 1938, when a coalition of conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats took control of Congress and kept it until 1964. Our current era is unusual in that partisan divisions largely track ideological ones.

JAY WEISER
Associate Professor of Law
Zicklin School of Business
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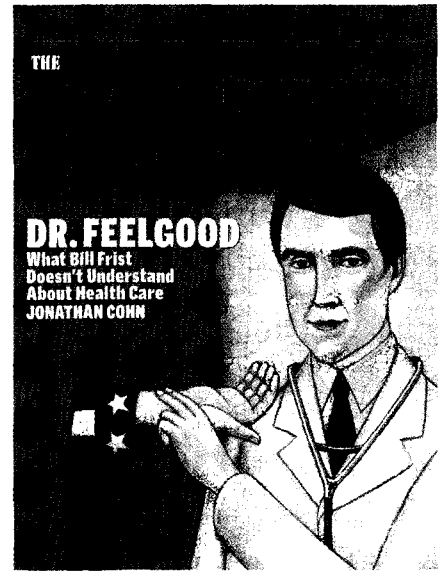
New York, New York

HAVANA CALLING

IN PETER BEINART'S TRB COLUMN, he makes the case that Latin American policy suffers because the "White House has marginalized the position of assistant secretary of state for Latin America," so the anti–Fidel Castro hard-liners can "harvest votes in South Florida" ("South End," January 27). I agree with Beinart 100 percent. But I would like to add that things



probably wouldn't be any different if Al Gore and the Democrats had won the election because the Democrats are proven anti-Castro sops themselves.

Why do I think the Democratic leadership veers "right" every time the anti-Castro hard-line agenda is challenged? The report "The Cuban Connection: Cuban-American Money in U.S. Elections 1979-2000," offers an important clue. "The total of all Cuban-American related political money given between 1979-2000 is $8,821,202. Of that total, $8.6 million went to candidates, party committees and leadership PACs, of which almost 60 percent went to Democrats."

The Democrats are willing to sacrifice coherent Latin American policy for the sake of following the money. That's why Gore and the Dems probably would have nominated Otto Reich or somebody else of that ilk themselves. And the train wreck that is now Latin America would have happened anyway.

SCOTT SUTHERLAND
Miami, Florida ■

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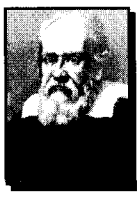
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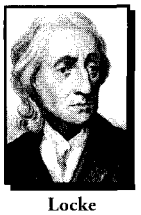
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A Separate Peace

TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

"LAST TIME, THIS NATION entered a war to make the world safe for democracy and establish permanent peace; it was betrayed in the event because its aims were not embodied in the peace settlement. Do we now risk such a betrayal again?" Looking back to World War I, this journal asked that question on August 25, 1941, in an editorial called "For a Declaration of War." And that is the question again today.

Today's war debate also occurs against the backdrop of a past betrayal. The first Bush administration rallied the country behind war in the Gulf with impassioned denunciations of Saddam Hussein's cruelty. And that moralistic language helped win over the small contingent of hawkish liberals—people like Al Gore, Joseph Lieberman, Bob Graham, and the editors of this magazine—who gave the war its bipartisan veneer. But, when the Shia and Kurds rose up against Saddam, in the naive belief that the United States cared more about their freedom than Riyadh's displeasure, Saddam slaughtered them as America's nearby army watched.

In the ensuing decade, however, several factors have conspired to dim the memory of that betrayal. First, while the Gulf war should have induced cynicism about the use of American power for liberal ends, it fostered optimism about American power itself. It showed just how awesome America's post-cold-war military really was. And that new awareness of the effectiveness of U.S. military actions created a new Democratic awareness of the political risks of opposing them.

Second, the Gulf war was followed by a succession of wars that were undeniably liberal in spirit. Bosnia, Haiti, and Kosovo conditioned liberals to see altruistic intervention as the post-cold-war U.S. norm. Led by an anti-Vietnam president and scorned by conservative realists as "social work," these were our wars. Even Afghanistan, although fought in self-defense, ended one of the most sinister regimes in modern memory.

For many liberals, none of this justifies war with Iraq. Suspicion about George W. Bush's motives, combined with vehement international opposition and the lack of an imminent threat, has produced nervous opposition on much of the moderate left. That opposition is hardly surprising—it is the logical product of American liberalism's post-Vietnam inclinations. What is surprising is the willingness of so many liberals to turn against that tradition; the fraternity of liberal hawks is far greater today than during the Gulf war. The '90s created a historic opening in the liberal psyche. And the Bush administration has exploited it. Its suggestion that war might not only free the people of Iraq but also set off a democratic chain reaction throughout the Middle East is tailor-made to appeal to liberals newly hopeful about American power. The national security argument for this war may be based on pessimism about the inevitable spread of weapons of mass destruction, but the political argument is based on post-1989 optimism about America's ability to bring liberal government to every corner of the globe.

It is just this kind of liberal optimism that historically precedes liberal betrayal. Liberals support this war because they hope it will bring certain political results, but they have limited influence over whether it will be prosecuted with those results in mind. The Bush administration at times frames the war in liberal terms, but, then, it frames its education and budgetary policies in liberal terms too. And its record on democratic postwar reconstruction is not encouraging.

In Afghanistan, the Pentagon's dogged resistance to a nationwide peacekeeping force has condemned large swaths of the country to warlordism. In Iraq, the Bush team says it is committed to turning post-Saddam Iraq into a model for the Arab world. But its new budget allocates not one cent for the effort. The justification, as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith recently testified, is that the cost of post-Saddam nation-building is "unknowable." (Someone forgot to tell the United Nations and the Congressional Budget Office, which have both recently published estimates.) The truth is that making Iraq a template for Arab liberalism will be expensive and protracted. And the Bush administration won't say so for fear of undermining public support for the war.

Indeed, the best-case scenario is that the Bush team is misleading the American people about the intensive political effort they have in mind once Saddam is gone. The worst-case scenario is that no such effort is even planned and that, in the name of stability, Riyadh and Foggy Bottom will settle on an Iraqi Pervez Musharaf. It is not a good sign, as Janine Zacharia recently reported in these pages (see "Exiled," February 17), that the closer we get to war, the more despondent the genuine Iraqi democrats sound.

The unhappy truth is that, if the Bush administration wins the war but betrays the peace, the political consequences for the president will be small. Once the fighting is over, the American press will turn its attention elsewhere, just as it has in post-Taliban Afghanistan. But the consequences for hawkish liberalism will be great. Having been played for fools, most liberal hawks will retreat to a deep skepticism of American power. They will end up on the decent, feckless left—in the company of those who sincerely condemn men such as Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam but have no strategy for toppling them except empty exhortations to people power. And that soft isolationism will likely retake the Democratic Party. On the right, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney won't lose sleep if Chevron and Crown Prince Abdullah run things in post-Saddam Baghdad rather than Kanan Makiya. Paul Wolfowitz will either shut up or resign.

Many people would consider this ideological reshuffling an improvement. At home, liberals could reclaim the language of human rights for themselves, secure in the knowledge that it, and they, would no longer be sullied by an association with the 82nd Airborne. The collapse of hawkish liberalism might actually diminish anti-Americanism abroad since, absent their liberal allies, Rumsfeld and Cheney would be less likely to drape their actions in the moralistic talk Europeans find so grating. After all, no one protests Russia's intervention in Chechnya on the streets of Paris and Rome.

But, when the next Bosnia did come along, its leaders wouldn't find America's new separation between liberalism and power nearly so refreshing; between the realist left and the McGovernite left, they would have nowhere to turn. The truth is that liberalism has to try to harness American military power for its purposes because American tanks and bombs are often the only things that bring evil to heel. Opposing this war might have helped liberals retain their purity, but it would have done nothing for the people suffering under Saddam. If liberals are betrayed a second time in the Gulf, hawkish liberalism may well go into temporary eclipse. But one day we, and they, will need it again.

PETER BEINART

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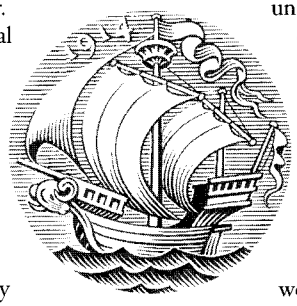
The Liberal Power

IF THE WORLD is not quite a village, it is nonetheless in the midst of a town meeting, and the heat is overtaking the light. What the world is arguing about so ferociously is the United States and its proper role in human history. The debate about Iraq is really a debate about the impact of America on the world. Our interlocutors, and even our enemies, are correct in this regard: There is no more significant fact about the present-day international order, no more sensational fact about it, than the prominence of the United States. We are staggeringly huge. The century that just passed was not the American century. This is the American century, and everybody knows it, and everybody loves it or hates it.

There are two characteristics of the United States that have impressed themselves most forcefully upon our contemporaries: American power and American liberalism. In terms of military might, the relative advantage of the United States is now so great that it must be measured in orders of magnitude. Our country has never before loomed so large; and this looming is what some observers mean what they speak sloppily about "the American imperium." (The influence of a great power need not be an imperialist influence: This is the proposition that American foreign policy in its finest internationalist version sets out to prove.) Certainly there never was a more powerful state; and, since there was never a state so consecrated to technology, the quality of American power also relentlessly grows.

The enormous relative advantage of the United States as a state is matched by the enormous relative advantage of the United States as a society. In terms of the life prospects that it offers to its inhabitants, the American dispensation represents another difference of many dimensions. There is no more vivid proof of this American priority than the extraordinary phenomenon of the immigration to our shores. There are countries that people risk their lives to escape, but this is a country that people risk their lives to enter. They do not come here in the certainty that they will find paradise. They come here in the certainty that they will find possibility. Indeed, the American revolution in human affairs was owed to the intuition, the illumination even, that in this nasty terrestrial life possibility is a greater gift than paradise.

What is the relationship between these American supremacies? What has American power to do with American liberalism? The primary task of every American government and every American citizen is to find a way to bring these American strengths into some sort of harmony with each other. The harmony is not a natural one, of course: The annals are littered with the cautionary tales of states that allowed their muscles to spoil them and their contentments to enfeeble them. And America is a democratic hegemon, which is an unprecedentedly daunting vocation. It leaves no room for sentimentality, or for the kind of patriotism that is nothing more than a noisy vanity. We must love our country, but we must not love ourselves. For our power does not make us right, and our virtue does not make us innocent. Our virtue is in any case not perfect: The United States is a more decent place, but not always; a fairer place, but not always; a more just place, but not always. Is God on our side? In our offices we have no way to know; but we believe that the moral and political agency that falls upon men and women in an open and pluralist society makes them more than vessels of ancient traditions and obscure divinities. Whatever the limits of reason, democracy is one of reason's beautiful consequences; and the calling to improve democracy at home and to inculcate democracy abroad is humbling enough.



If the strong are not right because of their strength, the weak are not right because of their weakness. The United States does not owe the world an apology for the magnitude of its power. Enough Acton: Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, except when it does not. As individuals and as a society, we have the inner resources and the constitutional arrangements to resist the poisons of power. And power may also ennoble, when it is employed for good and high ends. The notion that American power has never been so employed and can never be so employed is a sinister lie, and a counsel of despair to the hurting regions of the world. In many of its uses, American power has been the indispensable instrument of the ideal of freedom—which is a universal ideal, not an American ideal; a universal ideal that it has been an American privilege to serve.

The liberal power: It is not a contradiction, it is a consummation. If we get it right, that is. There are terrors of which only American power can rid the world, and blessings that only American power can secure for the world. Not everything that the United States does in the world is an admirable deed, obviously; but the new anti-Americanism must be recognized for what it is, which is the new medievalism, a vast explosion of resentment that amounts to a crisis of faith in what used to be called progress. But we still believe in progress, and so we still believe in America. ■

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NOTEBOOK

1919 . . . 1941 . . . 2001

Since its founding by Herbert Croly in 1914, THE NEW REPUBLIC *has struggled to reconcile its creed, liberalism, with the relentless growth of U.S. power. These efforts, unsurprisingly, have been mixed—sometimes prescient, sometimes deeply flawed. At times, the magazine has been optimistic about harnessing American might in service of human progress; at times that optimism has given way to deep disillusion. But the relationship between national identity and universal principle remains central to* TNR*'s mission. With this in mind, we fill this week's Notebook with selected writings on liberalism and American power from* TNR*'s 89-year history. (Notebook will return to its usual form—including "Inside the Box"—next week.)*

Herbert Croly

"IN OUR OPINION THE TREATY OF Versailles subjects all liberalism . . . to a decisive test. . . . It is the most shameless and, we hope, the last of those treaties which, while they pretend to bring peace to a mortified world, merely write the specifications for future revolution and war. It presents liberalism with a perfect opportunity of proving whether or not it is actually founded in positive moral and religious conviction. If a war which was supposed to put an end to war culminates without strenuous protest by humane men and women in a treaty of peace which renders peace impossible, the liberalism which preached this meaning for the war will have committed suicide. . . . It will abandon society to an irresistible conflict between the immoral and intransigent forces of Junkerism and revolutionary socialism."

—"Peace at Any Price," May 24, 1919

"AMERICAN OPINION HAS CHERished a wholly unrealistic distinction between defense and attack. There is no doubt who is the aggressor in the basic sense. Our peace with Germany would still be cordial if the Nazis had not proclaimed themselves a master race and set out to conquer the world. But, since we are convinced that the Axis is *our* enemy as well as the enemy of the many peoples it has conquered and is at the moment trying to conquer, why is it justifiable defense to fight only when it crosses an imaginary line, and unjustifiable attack to fight before? . . . It will cost fewer lives and less misery if we do so at the best strategical time and place, even if that happens to be on the exact opposite side of the globe from Washington, D.C."

—"For A Declaration of War," August 25, 1941

"EVER SINCE THE RUSSIAN REVOlution, many sincere liberals from John Reed to John-Paul Sartre, though they might have admitted that Communism was often brutal and cynical, usually in the end came back to the same point: its stand against exploitation was nearer to the Sermon on the Mount than was Capitalism. Whenever presented with a choice between the two, many men of good will were inclined to give Communism the benefit of the doubt. . . . Despite the Russian war against Finland, despite the horror of the labor camps and the slaughter trials, the great myth of the 20th Century remained intact, though battered. Only a few brave and lonely souls like George Orwell fully understood the nature of the betrayal. It is this myth that the Russian tanks crushed as they lurched into Budapest."

—"Myth with Nine Lives," November 26, 1956

"WE ARE THE CAPTIVES OF RASH commitments gripped by the persistent delusion that victory for 'our' Vietnamese is a life-and-death necessity. The frustration of the dissenters is understandable, for they cannot meet the demand put upon them—to make sense out of a situation that is senseless, to tell the administration how to get out of a trap the critics warned against getting into. They have no power in the White House, or in Hanoi. The evangelical impulse of America is against them, an impulse strengthened by 20 years of anti-communist editorializing, as well as by an economy so largely powered by military orders. . . . [A]ll of us—in Vietnam and here at home—are sacrificing for a cause that is not worth it. . . . We are waging a war that is none of our business and which cannot be justified by any moral imperative or threat to our national security."

—"Hung-Up on Vietnam," December 10, 1966

"THE WAR [IN VIETNAM], THIS journal insisted, was politically and morally wrong; it was wrong for *reasons*, and for similar reasons, we must be prepared to oppose similar wars. But not necessarily all wars or all use (or threats) of force. It would be foolish to cling to an arbitrarily consistent policy that disregards all possible cases. . . . Our decisions in Vietnam were motivated by an ideology that magnified a civil war into a universal conflict, and made a parochial struggle an

DAVID COWLES

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issue between international communism and the 'free world.' American policymakers, ignoring local circumstances, were disposed to fight limited wars for global reasons. It would be yet another disastrous consequence of this disastrous war if the opponents of the Vietnam adventure were to emerge from this period with their own global ideology predisposing them to blurring moral distinctions and ignoring the realities of political life."

—*"Learning the Wrong Lessons,"*
February 1, 1975

"SPEAKING PHILOSOPHICALLY, democracy is an absolute. It is for all men and women in all places at all times. Speaking historically, however, democracy has been the consequence of certain social, economic, political, and cultural conditions. The primary fact about Central America, the rudest reality in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras, is that the proper conditions for the development of democracy do not yet exist, nor will they exist for some time to come."

—*"The Debate,"*
October 24, 1983

"THERE IS PANIC IN WASHINGTON these days, panic in the corridors of power and in the aisles of Congress. The panic is over Lebanon. And it is not based only upon an analysis of what will happen there. It is based also upon an analysis of what will happen here—that is to say, of how American policy in Lebanon, which is an important part of American policy toward a region of supreme historical importance, will play politically. ... Lebanon is a great test for the political class of the United States. Our country will pay for the fecklessness of the Administration and the cynicism of the opposition. Their message to the world now is that the United States may fight only easy three-day wars, and that any struggle more arduous in which terrorism is used against us is beyond our capacity. What a message that is to the tyrants and aggressors of the world."

—*"The Panic of '84,"*
January 23, 1984

"WHEN BLOOD IS SPILLED, IT IS the responsibility of those who spill it, and the responsibility of those who could have stopped its spilling. For this reason, the carnage in the market of Sarajevo shamed also the White House, which should have been shamed long ago. Bill Clinton's dilatory, casuistic response to the great crime in the Balkans was not only shameful, it also marked a moment in the history of American foreign policy. This administration is transforming the only superpower in the world into the only abdicating superpower in the world. Poor Bosnia, it should have found itself in a trade war. Trade wars we fight. Wars of genocide we watch."

—*"The Abdication,"*
February 28, 1994

"IT IS THE BIRTHDAY OF THE UNITED Nations, but who can honestly say that it is a happy one? ... The evils that the U.N. set out to destroy are prospering; and while not all this dark prosperity is the consequence of the U.N., a terrible measure of it is. During the cold war, the U.N. became a chamber of hypocrisy and proxy aggression, and it had nothing at all to do with the greatest victory in the cause of human rights and social progress in its time, which was the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since the cold war, the U.N. has done little to alleviate, and in some instances it has abetted, some of the worst savagery in the world. So Mr. President, you really must be prepared sometimes to go it alone. ... For it is when the United States goes it alone that the genuine democrats and the genuine agents of social change around the world do not go it alone."

—*"The October Surprise,"*
October 30, 1995

"IT IS NOT TRUE THAT THE ATTACKS of September 11 were unimaginable; and anyway imagination is no longer necessary, now that we have memory. It is not true that they were crazy, except by our standards and the standards of civilization; but those are not the only standards in the world. It is not true that they were senseless, because they made sense to the people who carried them out, and to the individuals and the movements and the states that supported them or applauded them. It is not true that they are unfathomable: they were actions with reasons. These evil deeds were the results of beliefs. If we do not comprehend those reasons and those beliefs, then all we will do is mourn our dead and heal ourselves back into the traditions of our complacence. History is asking more of this country than sorrow."

—*"It Happened Here,"*
September 24, 2001 ■

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
Committee on Conscience

Yugoslavia: The Fall of Milosevic

March 9, 2003

a template of excellence ... breathtaking... a complex story has been made coherent and elegant

—*The Sunday Times*, London

This three-part documentary tells the inside story of how Slobodan Milosevic was brought down. Presidents, prime ministers, generals, police, activists, and even Milosevic's allies, describe his fall from President of Yugoslavia to prisoner on trial for war crimes and genocide.

This is the only scheduled public showing in the United States of all three parts in their entirety. Produced by the acclaimed British film company Brook Lapping, each segment is 90 minutes long.

11 a.m. ***DEFIANCE***— Milosevic fixes the 1996 elections and cracks down on Kosovar Albanians.

1 p.m. ***WAR***— The West wins the 1999 war in Kosovo, but a dispute with Russia makes the victory uncertain.

3 p.m. ***FINISHED***— Milosevic tries to ride out electoral defeat in 2000, until the opposition takes to the streets.

Admission is free and open to the public. Attend any or all of the screenings, which are being held in the Museum's Helena Rubinstein Auditorium. For reservations, call 202.314.7868.

Presented by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in cooperation with The Discovery Channel

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What Lincoln knew about war.

Resolved

BY PAUL BERMAN

TOCQUEVILLE FIGURED THAT a liberal society could not, in fact, wield power. The vitality of American life confirmed his belief that social equality ("democracy," in his usage) was the wave of the future, even in Europe. But government in the United States was based on unusual principles—on popular sovereignty, federalism, and liberal rights—and those principles added up, in his estimation, to weakness. The United States consisted of 24 states and seemed to function well enough—for the moment. But someday the number of states was going to swell, he imagined, to 40, with a gigantic population of maybe 100 million. And, sooner or later, America's flimsy political system, under that kind of weight, was bound to break down.

"I would like to contribute to the faith in human perfectibility," he wrote in a section of *Democracy in America* titled "What Are the Chances of Duration for the American Union? What Dangers Threaten It?" "But until men have changed their nature and are completely transformed, I will refuse to believe in the longevity of a government whose task is to hold together forty diverse peoples spread across a surface equal to half of Europe, to keep them from falling into rivalries, plots, and struggles, and to bring together their independent wills into action for common plans."

This was not a foolish worry. A couple of decades after Tocqueville made his U.S. tour, the problem that he had detected in America's liberal principles brushed up against the live wire that he had likewise detected in America's attitudes and customs regarding race. Rivalries, plots, and struggles duly combusted in the form of Southern secession. And the U.S. system did fall apart, exactly as he had feared. But then came what Tocqueville could never have imagined.

Let us recall that U.S. democracy, in its Northern rump, might perfectly well have accepted the departure of the Southern states. In the North, a good many respectable leaders of the Democratic Party, not just the Irish mobs in New York's streets, advocated just such a passive acceptance. A shrunken United States would have had to accommodate the fearsome British and French imperialists (everyone forgets the French, but they were expanding just then into Mexico), not to mention the Spanish Empire in Cuba. A rump United States might not have survived for very long under those circumstances. Still, it might have prospered in the meanwhile. It might even have benefited from the amputation of its Southern half, might have become a second Canada or something still more adventurous in time: a Sweden of the New World, a social-democratic land of New Deals uninhibited by Bourbon alliances, a virtuous center of commerce and industry. A republic, in short, such as the many little republics of Florence and other cities in the Middle Ages, which blossomed splendidly for a few decades and then, in their defenseless condition, were invariably crushed under the heel of some marauding army. That was definitely an American possibility.

The U.S. is armed to the teeth, but has disarmed itself of moral leadership.

Instead, the United States adopted the program that Abraham Lincoln unveiled at Gettysburg, in a speech that responded to virtually every one of Tocqueville's worries in "Chances of Duration." Like Tocqueville, Lincoln looked on the United States in the light of world history and not just as an isolated country—looked on the United States as a country that was experimenting with a possible future for the entire world. Lincoln's phrase about "conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" specified the double principle of liberal government ("liberty") and social equality ("democracy"). And Lincoln worried about duration—"whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."

In arguing that liberal democracy would, in fact, endure,

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DEVON BOWMAN

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Lincoln did not invoke any kind of external or more-than-human force—the power of God, perhaps, or of providence. Nor did he cite the practical advantages of Northern industrialization and economic power or the size of the Northern population or some other material fact. Nor did he ruminate on "human perfectibility," in Tocqueville's mocking phrase. Lincoln considered that the United States was going to endure because it *chose* to do so—because of an act of will: "We here highly resolve"—that was his message. And he gave force to this message by defining the two aims of the war, as he was conducting it—two aims and not more, simplicity itself: "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the Earth." Which is to say: solidarity with the oppressed—in this case, the American slaves (the "new birth of freedom" referred to their liberation); and universal ambitions—the ambitions that were invoked by that final, most emotional, almost unbearably passionate word in his address, the final reverberating bang on his giant drum: the "Earth," meaning the whole Earth, not just a single corner of a single continent.

Liberal democracy was going to endure, in short, by taking on grander and more radical goals than ever before—by becoming more revolutionary, not less; by offering, in some form or another, liberty and solidarity to the entire world. This kind of response to Southern secession might seem counterintuitive—to take on more burdens, instead of less, just when the night was darkest. But it was the nature of liberalism that pushed Lincoln in this direction. He chose to radicalize the U.S. republic because he knew that, in order to survive, liberal democracy needed to arouse among its own citizens a greater commitment than ever before to the cause of universal freedom—in fact, an absolute commitment, which could only mean a commitment unto death. This, too, was the meaning of "we here highly resolve." For where was "here"? Here was a cemetery. Lincoln was eloquent even in his choice of speaking platforms.

TODAY, WE ARE living through not just a military crisis but something of a political crisis within the larger liberal democratic world, trans-Atlantically. Robert Kagan has written a subtle and brilliant book on this theme called *Of Paradise and Power*, and I don't want to try to characterize his whole complicated argument here. I wish only to point to Kagan's view that, in the United States, people tend to suppose that we inhabit a "Hobbesian" world filled with nasty and brutish types who need to be stoutly clubbed from time to time, whereas, in Western Europe, people tend to picture themselves inhabiting a "Kantian" world, in which lions and lambs lay down in perpetual peace according to international law or can be lured into doing so.

This idea seems to me almost entirely wrong. The modern European idea does not seem to me Kantian. It seems to me Tocquevillean. It is a liberal democratic idea of a sort that cannot conceive of wielding power. It assumes that liberal democracy can only follow the path of a Sweden or a Switzerland or a Florentine Republic—the liberal democracy of virtuous and admirable countries that cannot possibly defend themselves, except by being inoffensive. In the European idea, power is imperial or nothing—the power of brutal empires, such as the Europeans themselves used to administer. Kagan writes that Europe has chosen to emphasize a nonviolent approach to world events today because the Europeans do not enjoy an option of doing otherwise. But the opposite is true. The Europeans (as Kagan acknowledges in a somewhat contradictory remark), with their 400 million people and their $9 trillion economy, could make themselves extremely powerful. They do not choose to do so. It is because they wish to be liberal democrats. And liberal democracy, in their concept, is a compromise, a mediocrity. It is, by definition, a negotiation—a good thing, but, as Tocqueville took pains to show, not *entirely* a good thing. And, because the Europeans cannot conceive or accept the notion of liberal democracy as a revolutionary project for universal liberation, they cannot imagine how to be liberal democrats and wield power at the same time. They simply cannot imagine how an exercise of force might bring about political revolutions in remote corners of the world—cannot imagine this, even though the experience of their largest country, Germany, offers a superb and vivid example.

In the United States, on the other hand, a great many people—not everyone, but many—naturally assume that every country, all over the world, will eventually embrace liberal democracy. In American eyes, the revolutions of 1989 were, at bottom, not at all surprising—they were the kind of revolutions that Americans have spent 200 years impatiently expecting to see. And, if the Eastern European revolutions of 1989 have not yet spread to still further regions of the world—if liberal democracy has not yet swept the Arab world and sundry zones within the larger Muslim world—why, that is only a matter of time, and we Americans ought meanwhile to show a little solidarity and do what we can to help, as we have done so effectively on behalf of the benighted Europe of yore. This view of world affairs is not Hobbesian. But neither is it Tocquevillean. It is Lincolnian.

In one respect Kagan seems to me on the mark. His idea about Hobbesian Americans and Kantian Europeans does express the way in which two specific groups of people see the Atlantic divide. The first of those groups includes a great many Europeans who picture the United States as Hobbesian precisely because, like Tocqueville, they cannot imagine how a liberal democracy could wield power; and, since the United States does wield power, its behavior must owe to a nasty brutishness that is not at all liberal and democratic. (And, to be sure, sometimes they are right.) The second group of people who share Kagan's perspective are the American partisans of foreign policy "realism," whose own doctrinal principles insist on a variation of the old Symbolist slogan about "art for art's sake," except this time in a political version: power for power's sake. These people know perfectly well that liberal democratic motives have driven U.S. foreign policies in moments of the past and that liberal democratic motives

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still drive portions of U.S. policy; but they cannot really integrate these two insights—their belief in power for power's sake with their observation about the idealist impulses of some of their fellow citizens. And so, the realists bow piously toward the liberal democratic idea; and then, once the services have concluded, they go on prattling about power for power's sake.

And here we stumble on a peculiar tragedy of our present moment. The United States has come under military attack, requiring military responses. But, as in the Civil War, the revolutionary responses of liberal democratic ideals are likewise required, and not in a small degree. For the ultimate goal of our present war—the only possible goal—must be to persuade tens of millions of people around the world to give up their paranoid and apocalyptic doctrines about American conspiracies and crimes, to give up those ideas in favor of a lucid and tolerant willingness to accept the modern world with its complexities and advantages. The only war aim that will actually bring us safety is, in short, the spread of liberal outlooks to places that refuse any such views today. That is not a small goal, nor a goal to be achieved in two weeks, nor something to be won through mere military feats, though military feats cannot be avoided.

In each of the greatest crises of its past, the United States has known how to summon its most radical ideals and to express them in ever deeper versions to ourselves and to our enemies—as Lincoln did; as Woodrow Wilson did; as Franklin Roosevelt did two times over, first against the fascists and then, at the end of his life, in sketching a few preliminary notions for the impending cold war. But, on these themes, our present White House has turned out to be incoherent. George W. Bush's demeanor, his undignified language (and even the language of his speechwriters, which is oddly antique, without any hint of the revolutionary liberalism of 1989 and the modern era), his early bias against what he derided as "nation-building," the continuing sneer at revolutionary liberation that is contained in the sinister phrase "regime change," his antipathy toward the ideals of international law, his uncultured air—these are traits that Hobbes would surely have ascribed to an American head of state or to any head of state. Right now, we need to summon people around the world to express a "devotion" (in Lincoln's word) to liberal ideals—a devoted enthusiasm for those ideas among the schoolteachers in every impoverished immigrant suburb of Europe, among the editors in every Arab newspaper office, and among the professors in every Muslim university. We need the cooperation of millions of people, who, in their idealism, will rush out to argue with their own students and neighbors and readers. But the U.S. government, which knows how to twist the arms of Turkish politicians, does not know how to inspire the schoolteachers and newspaper editors and professors, not to mention the European masses, not to mention the American masses. Worse, the American leaders don't even try to inspire people around the world, which is shocking to see, considering that our current problem is 90 percent political and only 10 percent military.

And so, we find ourselves in the midst of a Lincolnian war, a war for the liberation of others, yet led by people with Hobbesian instincts—find ourselves plunged into a crisis of liberal democracy, in which our leaders do not know what Lincoln knew, which was how to appeal to the ever more radical principles of liberal democracy. Our military is armed to the teeth, which turns out to be a good thing. (I admit it.) But our government has for some reason disarmed itself unilaterally in the realms of persuasion, inspirational example, philosophical clarity, and moral leadership. How did this happen to us? It has happened to us. Tocqueville thought that liberal societies could not wield power, and Lincoln proved him wrong. I am terrified that we are in the process of proving Lincoln wrong—that we are wielding power without liberalism, which will turn out to be no power at all. ■

What war can't achieve.

Smart Money

BY JEFFREY SACHS

In George W. Bush's post–September 11, 2001, vision, our nation faces serious risks only if it fails to use decisively our vast military power. We are, after all, the world's hyperpower, the country whose military capacity outranks that of the next 20 nations combined. According to Bush, that power can be translated into national security, if we are steadfast enough to use it, by carrying the war on terrorism to the terrorists and to rogue states like Iraq. Bush's new national security doctrine, above all else, calls upon us to strike first before those enemies gain access to weapons of mass destruction. Since the United States is powerful enough to do that, we can fail only by failing to act. The administration doesn't quibble about whether such actions are preemptive or preventative; either way they are protective.

Military action has thereby become the administration's defining response to September 11, and, for that reason, war in Iraq is imminent no matter what the rest of the world might say. Delaying action, according to Bush, means denying the United States the means of our own defense, and any obstacle to U.S. action is per se a threat to us as well. If the United Nations slows us down, it is inimical to American security. If friends such as France and Germany warn us away from action, they must not really be friends after all. The media amplifies the Bush administration's scorn for anything and anybody that holds back the United States from its appointed course. The administration means it when it says we are not going to wait around to prove whether or not Saddam Hussein

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has weapons of mass destruction. He probably does, but, even if he doesn't, he surely seeks them. For Bush, that's enough to justify war.

The combination of unilateralism and militarism now at the core of the Bush security doctrine is unprecedented in modern U.S. foreign policy. And, whatever can be said about the accuracy of the administration's depiction of Saddam as an imminent danger to the world, one thing is clear: The Bush administration, in a short period of time, has scared the wits out of most of the world, leading to a wave of global anti-Americanism that could never have been imagined just a few months ago—especially after the worldwide outpouring of sympathy in the wake of September 11, 2001. Indeed, antipathy to the Bush Doctrine, and its potential use in Iraq, provoked what was perhaps the largest worldwide protest in history on February 15.

It is now a mark of honor for many in the administration to stand up to the complaints of the Europeans and the United Nations. They smugly trust that American power will carry the day. But they are wrong. The White House is vastly underestimating how painful and difficult the Iraq conflict and reconstruction will be, because it is making a broader, deeper mistake: It is vastly overestimating the utility of military power. And, because of this mistake, the collapse of worldwide trust in the United States will have prolonged and pernicious effects, greatly multiplying the costs that our country will soon bear in a conflict. We will find that the president's belief in the redemptive power of the military is misplaced—not because we'll lose the war but because we'll lose the peace or, more accurately, suffer prolonged instability and violence in the region and around the globe as the world turns increasingly hostile to American ideology and pretensions.

A U.S.-LED WAR could find vindication in the world's eyes under the ghastly circumstance that Iraq launches chemical or biological weapons against American troops, other countries in the region, or Iraq's own citizens. Vindication of the Bush strategy would also come quickly if American troops uncover a hidden nuke in the Iraqi sand. Short of those circumstances, however, the war and its aftermath will be hugely unpopular throughout the world, and hugely destabilizing as a result, as it will reveal America's weaknesses.

Three profound lessons about military power will be replayed in the aftermath of a war with Iraq. First, a conventional army on the ground cannot suppress local uprisings or guerrilla warfare without tremendous bloodshed and years of agony. For decades, the British could not suppress the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland. The vast military might of Israel cannot suppress the Palestinian uprising. The Russians could not suppress the mujahedin in Afghanistan in the 1980s or the Chechens in the 1990s. The United States took casualties and quickly departed from both Lebanon and Somalia and even now is struggling to gain control in Afghanistan outside of Kabul. Under much worse circumstances, the United States is about to insert itself for years into the vicious internecine struggles of Iraq, where tens of thousands of angry young men will be keen to pick off the occupying force. Our smart bombs won't prove as helpful at ground level as they do at 35,000 feet.

Second, still less can a conventional army, even one backed by $380 billion per year in spending, suppress a swath of popular unrest across the Islamic world that stretches for nearly 10,000 miles. As our unilateralist actions make enemies where none existed before, we will find ourselves facing an intifada that extends far beyond Palestine and Al Qaeda. There are literally tens of thousands of soft U.S. targets to attack—hotels, factories, ports, ships, power grids—that cannot be protected adequately. The bombings in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Aden, Mombasa, and Bali, by attackers impervious to U.S. military power, are just omens of what will come. And, as security concerns induce global investors to avoid Muslim regions, the resulting economic turmoil will exacerbate the unrest itself, just as the economic misery in the West Bank provides some of the tinder for the ongoing Palestinian intifada.

Third, the longer-term economic consequences for the United States and the rest of the world will be stark. Here's where Donald Rumsfeld and his colleagues don't seem to have a clue. Our economic well-being depends not only on oil, machinery, skills, and technology but also on the sophisticated global division of labor in which these inputs are effectively used. American companies have operations around the world, with more than $2 trillion in direct investments overseas and networks of suppliers and customers which extend far beyond that. Our prosperity depends on the worldwide cross-border movements of millions of people each day, including traders, engineers, investors, scientists, and tourists, as well as the flows of merchandise, finance, and ideas.

A widening regional conflict following a war with Iraq is likely to undermine this sophisticated worldwide division of labor. Widening violence will disrupt trade lines; raise insurance costs and shipping tariffs; slow customs, ports, and immigration services; undercut tourism and business travel; cause spikes in world energy prices; and delay business decisions. It will make international commerce and investment more expensive, thereby shifting production away from long supply lines that are more efficient and economical under stable political circumstances.

The disruptions of September 11 offer an augury. Even though the direct economic losses of the attacks were small relative to the size of the U.S. economy, the disaster has undermined economic recovery for more than a year. The stock market is around 20 percent lower today than it was on September 10, 2001, business investment plans are still in abeyance, world oil prices have remained at least 20 percent higher, the airline industry has sunk into bankruptcy, and foreign investment both into and out of the United States has declined markedly. September 11 is certainly not the only cause of these mishaps, but it has played an important role, in part by raising the expectations of follow-up war. In the same way, the economic effects of the Palestinian uprising on the Israeli economy are orders of magnitude greater than the direct damage.

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And the adverse effects on the U.S. economy may pale in comparison with the effects on other hard-hit countries closer to Iraq. Around 2.4 billion people, 40 percent of the world, live in countries that are at least 10 percent Muslim. Virtually all of these countries risk some degree of destabilization from a war in Iraq. They may lose remittances from the Middle East as their workers flee the region. They are likely to be viewed as less hospitable places for foreign investment. Turkey suffered drastic economic losses after the Gulf war—due to the collapse of trade with Iraq and a decrease in foreign investment as companies exited the Middle East for regions viewed as more stable. This time, Turkey is bracing for another economic disruption as a result of war and the potential costs of caring for thousands of Kurdish refugees fleeing Iraq.

The Bush administration and many Americans seem to expect that Iraq's oil will pay for postwar occupation, reconstruction, and more—that there will be reconstruction contracts to tender, new reservoirs to develop, and lower world oil prices on the way. If only it were so. Iraq's new oil fields will take years to renovate and expand, probably under contentious political and security conditions. Iraq's existing creditors hold claims for more than $150 billion. They will certainly insist on their place in the queue.

ALL THIS HIGHLIGHTS the folly of the Bush administration's unilateralism, its tremendous misjudging of the real meaning of U.S. power. And yet there is still time for the administration to back away from its unilateral rush to war. The rapid rise of worldwide opposition is spilling back to the United States and impacting American public opinion, especially as the public assesses the steeply rising costs of going to war alone. If we suddenly chose to pay heed to others in the Security Council, we would quickly reduce global anxieties and, even at this very late date, could still find a common strategy in battling weapons of mass destruction. Bolstering the U.N. inspections for several months and tightening the diplomatic noose on Saddam could prove decisive or, at the least, set the stage for U.N.-approved military action. With patience and creativity, we may even find an intermediate military strategy that defangs Saddam while staying short of a full invasion and occupation.

More generally, the current crisis could be the last chance for a while for us to learn the real meaning of global power. Our military might is no doubt important, as it allows us to defend the United States against any prospective coalition of enemies and also to protect our allies and vital resources—including Middle East oil—from attack. But military power, no matter how overwhelming, cannot easily be turned into direct economic advantage or global goodwill and trust, upon which globalization depends.

In addition to our military power, therefore, we have to translate our economic wealth and technological prowess into a different kind of power—the power to help shape the global cooperation institutions on which we will depend for our livelihoods and our long-term prosperity. The much-maligned United Nations, the very institution we are doing so much to threaten by our current unilateralism, remains the single best hope for shaping a world to our liking in the twenty-first century. Through the United Nations and specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF, or the Food and Agriculture Organization, we could deploy our economic strengths to overcome poverty, deal with climate-change problems, and fight debilitating diseases. We could help rid the world of the poverty that provides fertile ground for upheaval, dislocation, and terrorism. Over the long run, we would build international goodwill and shared values that would diminish the anti-American fury that threatens our lives and economic well-being. War with Iraq will, tragically, do the exact opposite. ■

Liberalism v. national interest.

Self Service

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

TO HEAR DEMOCRATIC leaders and Democratic political candidates declaim on war is to conclude that liberals are totally incoherent on the subject of power. Liberalism, on the other hand, is quite coherent. It is important to distinguish between the two. Politicians are pulled by public opinion, by calculations of political advantage, and by other nonideological considerations. Hence, the cacophony of liberal voices about war with Iraq. Not only do these voices contradict each other, but some contradict themselves, not only day to day but even within the same speech—for instance, John Kerry and Edward Kennedy, who make elaborate cases as to why deterrence is to be preferred over war in Iraq and then absurdly add that, of course, Iraq must be disarmed.

In the United States, where party discipline is so lax, it is particularly hard to ascribe thematic coherence to the party out of power. To speak definitively about American liberalism's view of power, one has to look at what it did when it ran U.S. foreign policy. During the 1990s, liberalism spoke quite clearly. Strikingly, the very same party that voted overwhelmingly against going to war to expel Iraq from Kuwait ordered American troops to intervene in Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and dramatically escalated American intervention in Somalia.

It is thus a mistake to say that liberalism is hostile to the exercise of power in and of itself. When given authority, liberalism rained hell on Serbia, killed a host of Somalis, and used the threat of overwhelming force to take over Haiti. The problem for liberals is not the notion of power. It is the notion

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of national interest. It is not that they oppose power in principle but that they have great difficulty seeing national interest as a justification for wielding power. Their ostensible aversion to power is really an aversion to deploying it selfishly, as they see it, in pursuit of parochial American interests; they are quite willing to use power—indeed, promiscuously so—for disinterested reasons of humanitarianism as detached as possible from any concrete American national advantage. They like their power pure.

For post-cold-war liberalism, self-interest is tainted and corrupting. It is not just a dispensable criterion for intervention, it is disqualifying. The apparent liberal flip-flops on intervention now begin to make sense. In Kuwait, in 1991, where American national interests were seriously engaged (inaction would have left the Arabian peninsula in the control of Iraq and quickly transformed it into a nuclear regional superpower), they opposed the use of force. In Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans, where American national interests are at most only tangentially engaged, they themselves sent in the cavalry.

Liberals intervened in these strategically marginal locales not out of any desire to injure America. On the contrary, they did it out of a deep desire to purify, to redeem America by making her an instrument of justice. Liberalism does not lack for patriotism. On the contrary, it believes that it is ennobling the United States with a foreign policy of altruism. And, because only intervention devoid of self-interest is morally unimpeachable, it is the only kind that a good conscience can support.

A classic example of this requirement of disinterestedness emerged during an exchange between Madeleine Albright and editors of *The Washington Post* shortly before the invasion of Haiti. She was questioned about the necessity of the invasion. She countered: If the cold war were still on and "if Haiti were threatened by communism, none of you would be raising these questions."

Well, of course they would not. There would then be a clear, strategic reason for the operation. For Albright, however, it was precisely because the Haiti operation was devoid of strategic rationale—unlike Cuba, or Nicaragua for that matter, Haiti was hardly going to become a Soviet beachhead in the Americas—that an invasion could be justified. To have a strategic reason, meaning to have a reason that satisfies a selfish national interest, is thus a moral taint.

One might argue that my thesis about liberalism and power is contradicted by the war in Afghanistan and the unanimous support it enjoyed both among the elites and the public. I think not. Self-defense is a special case—as scientists say, a trivial case. No serious person opposes the use of force in self-defense. (Only principled pacifists and less admirable kooks do.) Thus, self-defense is useless as a criterion for distinguishing attitudes toward the use of power. We were attacked on September 11; we attacked Afghanistan to attack our attackers. It is a simple proposition, and, in international relations, axiomatic. There is not a single country on the planet that for any significant period of time adheres to pacifism. If there are any, or were any, they would simply and soon disappear; the state of nature that is the international system does not permit otherwise. Some countries, such as Japan, may (temporarily) delegate their self-defense to stronger friends, such as the United States. But that is not pacifism; that is prudence. And some, such as Switzerland, may abjure intervention in other people's wars; they are quite prepared, however, to fight their own. That is not pacifism either.

American liberals are not pacifists. Their aversion to power-for-national-interests does not extend to clear and present self-defense. Liberalism, after all, is not the stupid party. (Although, it must be noted, that what opposition there was to the Afghan war came mostly from the usual left-liberal precincts. Nonetheless, these can be written off as fringe elements.) But, when the dots need to be connected, when the train of causality is more strained, when the threat is more long-range and speculative, and when the motive of pure self-defense might be contaminated by other motives—such as bringing democracy at the point of a bayonet to a foreign land or even a foreign culture, such as demonstrating America's willingness to preemptively disarm potential adversaries—liberal support breaks down. Hence the liberal disarray over Iraq. The very thought that there might be some unintended auxiliary economic benefit from a war on Iraq—namely, control of Iraqi oil fields—is enough to make some liberals oppose the venture regardless of its other merits. If Kosovo had oil, liberals would have been found demonstrating against its liberation.

THE CASE FOR war in Iraq is complex, and the liberals are split. Bill Keller of *The New York Times* calls those who, like him, inhabit the usual *New Yorker*–like liberal precincts and yet, however grudgingly, support the war, the "I-Can't-Believe-I'm-a-Hawk Club." They are not really hawks, however. They are doves who've been mugged by reality, September 11 reality. They do count, although they are considerably outnumbered by the liberal intellectuals, celebrities, and political figures who have attached themselves to the "Not In Our Name" antiwar manifesto.

Among serious politicians, for every Joe Lieberman, there is a Carl Levin. For every Richard Gephardt, a Teddy Kennedy. Liberalism as a school of thought does not know what to think today. It knew what to think in 1991. With few exceptions (Lieberman among them), liberals were for "peace," meaning the status quo, with the flimsy political cover of sanctions. This despite the fact—for some, indeed, because of the fact—that we had obvious and extraordinary national interests in the Gulf, interests so obvious and extraordinary that even Jimmy Carter's own "Carter Doctrine" pledged American intervention in defense of the Gulf.

Last time around, war in the Gulf could hardly be portrayed as American self-defense. Kuwait was attacked, not New York. This time around, war in the Gulf can be portrayed as American self-defense, but that requires a train of logic. Hence the quandary: Liberalism supports simple self-defense

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but opposes national aggrandizement. It cannot therefore deal coherently with war in Iraq, which not only requires a complicated notion of self-defense but which necessarily will result in American aggrandizement through the extension of U.S. hegemony in the Arab world.

Which is why it was a conservative administration that conceived the idea and is following it through. For conservatives, the expansion of American power and the advance of American interests occasion neither shame nor remorse. ■

Herbert Croly's disappointment.

Homeward Bound

BY JOHN B. JUDIS

LIBERALS ARE NO strangers to foreign intervention. Democratic presidents took the United States into two world wars, as well as Korea and Vietnam; Bill Clinton himself sent American forces to Haiti, the Balkans, and Iraq. But, if there was a connection between liberalism at home and intervention abroad, it generally ran from the former to the latter. Liberals believed that by intervening abroad they were spreading or defending liberal values. The Clinton administration's 1996 National Security Strategy, for instance, was based on "enlarging . . . the community of democratic nations."

Herbert Croly, the founder and first editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC, believed this, too. But he also believed the reverse: that a vigorous foreign policy could aid liberalism at home. As he argued in his 1909 masterpiece *The Promise of American Life*, "[I]t is entirely possible that hereafter the United States will be forced into the adoption of a really national domestic policy because of the dangers and duties incurred through her relations with foreign countries."

During its first four years of publication, TNR would enthusiastically embrace this point of view. When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, Croly wrote exultingly to Willard Straight, the J.P. Morgan banker who had bankrolled the magazine, "During the next few years, under the stimulus of the war and its consequences, there will be a chance to focus the thought and will of the country on high and fruitful purposes such as occurs only once in many hundred years." But the war and its aftermath brought bitter disappointment to Croly, as his vision of an American liberalism strengthened by foreign engagement did not come to pass. Since then, the magazine he founded has continued to uphold liberalism at home and abroad, but it has abandoned the hope that war overseas would benefit the cause of liberalism at home.

CROLY'S CONCEPTION OF liberalism was an answer to the Jeffersonian individualism that dominated much of nineteenth-century U.S. politics. Thomas Jefferson had believed that the United States would achieve both liberty and equality by the diffusion of small property ownership, becoming a land of yeoman farmers and craftsmen. But, by the dawn of the twentieth century, the balance between liberty and equality had been lost as the unhampered growth of free enterprise led to great corporations, urban slums, and a large, unruly, and underpaid immigrant working class increasingly drawn to radical politics. "The traditional American confidence in individual freedom," wrote Croly, "has resulted in a morally and socially undesirable distribution of wealth." Moreover, these "gross inequalities" threatened the "social bond" on which democracy was based.

Americans differed on how and whether to resolve this looming contradiction between unfettered liberty and equality. Socialists advocated sacrificing free enterprise itself for equality; some progressives and populists wanted to use the Sherman Antitrust Act to break up large corporations and restore Jeffersonian America; conservatives warned that tampering with economic laws would only make things worse. Croly, for his part, argued that to reduce inequality while retaining the efficiency of the market, Americans should regulate rather than break up the large corporations. A strong national government should legitimate the recognition of unions, adopt restrictions on hours and other social reforms, and redistribute excess corporate profits and unearned wealth. Wrote Croly, "The hope of automatic democratic fulfillment must be abandoned. The national government must step in and discriminate; not on behalf of liberty and the special individual, but on behalf of equality and the average man."

Croly's liberalism—which he originally called "progressivism"—provided the platform for Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party in 1912 and for TNR. But how could that platform win over a country still dominated by Jeffersonian individualism? Croly saw two paths: first, through a nonhereditary "aristocracy" of enlightened business leaders, lawyers, intellectuals, and politicians, such as Roosevelt or Straight, who put the national interest above their class interest; second, a process of national "education." One opportunity for this education was politics and the attempt to adapt legislation to solve social problems. But the other opportunity came from the "vigorous assertion of a valid foreign policy." While Croly did not share Roosevelt or Straight's enthusiasm for a U.S. imperialism, he agreed with them that the United States would have to abandon its isolationism and take its place on the world stage. "Hitherto, the American preference and desire for peace has constituted the chief justification for its isolation," he wrote. "At some future time, the same purpose, just in so far as it is sincere and rational, may demand intervention." And such intervention, Croly believed, would require collective unity behind a strong national government and the creation of a "really national domestic policy" based on the cooperation of labor and business. It would require, in other words, Croly's new liberalism.

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In July 1914, as Croly was putting together the first issue of TNR, war broke out in Europe. In the editorial of that first issue, titled "The End of American Isolation," he wrote that the crisis "should bring with it a political and economic organization better able to redeem its obligations at home." Croly and the editors warned that, to create the conditions for peace, the United States might eventually have to join the war. "A nation does not commit the great sin when it fights," they wrote in December 1914. "It commits the great sin when it fights for a bad cause or when it is afraid to fight for a good cause." They further backed a new preparedness campaign, which, they argued, must include a commitment to the new liberalism: "Modern war requires the commandeering of much private property ... a large administrative machine composed of men with expert knowledge. Our present method of foozling with [i.e., bungling] unemployment, sickness, age, and infancy, would break down utterly in a war that really tested the nation."

Some critics of U.S. intervention, such as TNR contributor Randolph Bourne, warned that by going to war the United States would turn its back on the new liberalism and be infected by the virulent nationalism that had consumed Europe. But Croly insisted that Americans would be immune to the "usual war psychology" and would instead display a "spirit of nationalism [that] does not necessarily stand in the path" of a generous postwar settlement and a new international organization dedicated to peace. And, when the United States entered World War I, Croly and the other editors believed their hopes had been realized. Woodrow Wilson embraced their strategy for a nonpunitive peace. (TNR editor Walter Lippmann would go on leave to help draft Wilson's Fourteen Points.) And the administration established government planning boards staffed by business and labor leaders who worked cooperatively to manage production. Thanks to the war, the nation envisaged by *The Promise of American Life* seemed to have come into being.

But Croly and the magazine's hopes were dashed by the war and its conclusion. Croly had hoped that the war would encourage a new, sober internationalism, but instead it inspired among policymakers what Bourne called "the reversion of senility to that republican childhood when we expected the whole world to copy our republican institutions." When the world failed to comply, Wilson accepted at Versailles exactly the kind of punitive peace that the editors had railed against. Croly also admitted that he had not understood "what the psychology of the American people would be under the strain of fighting a world war." Croly had hoped it would strengthen a new nationalism that put country ahead of individual, section, and class; instead it encouraged chauvinism and xenophobia, culminating in the Palmer Raids in 1919, in which Wilson's ambitious attorney general, alleging a plot by Russian and German immigrants, jailed and deported thousands of labor radicals who had no criminal records. "[O]ne hundred and thirty years after the foundation of the American government," Croly wrote, "the right of asylum was abolished, and the ancient institutions of banishment and exile reestablished."

Finally, instead of leading the country to embrace Croly's new liberalism, the war's end resulted in a sharp turn toward conservatism. Croly had hoped that war would legitimate a strong central government, but instead it had led to a "formidable reaction," in Bourne's words, "against the arrogance of the idol which demanded so many sacrifices." Croly had also hoped the war would strengthen the commitment of business leaders to an accommodation between business and labor, but, once it was over, they sought to overturn the state minimum-wage and eight-hour-day laws and to break up the unions that had been organized with government support during the war. Croly now called for "purging our own liberalism of its existing association with a dominant class whose psychology is determined by the practice of acquisition and exclusive possession and whose interests are opposed to the fulfillment of a human liberal ideal." Croly still believed that the United States had been right to join the war in Europe. But he no longer believed that, in seeking peace through war, the United States could create the kind of collective commitment to the common good upon which the new liberalism was based.

Sadly, Croly's bitter lesson was lost on many future liberals. During World War II, Vice President Henry Wallace contended that war would strengthen and expand the nation's commitment to the New Deal, creating the basis for a "new democracy." Yet the war's end led, if anything, to the constriction of the New Deal. Most recently, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, some liberals predicted that the war on terror would revive Democratic prospects. Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg reported three months after the attacks that "distrust of government is down" and that "the emerging mood and values in this new period ... reflect the instinctive impulses of Democrats surely more than they do Republicans." Yet it is now clear that the war on terror has strengthened Republican conservatism, providing cover for the Bush administration to promote policies that would increase inequality, roll back environmental and labor protections, and weaken Social Security and Medicare. Indeed, the war on terror has revived many of the older wartime pathologies—from official xenophobia to evangelical illusions of omnipotence.

Croly remained at the helm of THE NEW REPUBLIC until he suffered a stroke in 1928. During that time, he never abandoned his faith in the new liberalism itself. It would be redeemed by Franklin Roosevelt's Second New Deal in 1935. What war had failed to accomplish, the crisis of depression did, bringing pressure for change from a resurgent working class and a new elite of disinterested public servants. This magazine would also not abandon its internationalism in the 1920s, even in the face of the prevailing isolationism, and that faith, too, would be redeemed, although not until World War II. But, after the experience of World War I, Croly and the magazine would never again rest their hopes for domestic change on the prospects of war and intervention. That hope was shattered by Wilson's Department of Justice, in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, and in the boardrooms of corporate America. ■

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Our abandoned Muslim allies.

They the People

BY AZAR NAFISI

A FEW DAYS AFTER the September 11 attacks, I received a note from a former student in Tehran. "[Y]ou won't believe it," she wrote, "but the whole country is in mourning. You should have been here for the demonstrations and candlelight vigils for America, it's all true: the tears, the long-stemmed roses, the candles, . . . and then of course the hoodlums attacked and started beating us, especially the young kids, and arresting them. . . . The funny thing about it is that those bastards felt betrayed by the love we showed 'the imperialist Zionist enemy.' . . . Ever since that night I keep asking myself, what is it that makes us in this God forsaken place to feel so orphaned and so filled with grief for what happened in a city we have never seen, except in dreams?"

To understand the love of which she speaks, you have to understand the hate coming from exactly the same part of the world—the hate that killed 3,000 on September 11, 2001. The source of this hatred does not lie in the wreckage at the World Trade Center or at the Pentagon but in other ruins: in cities in the Muslim world. It lies in the terror in a sports stadium turned into execution grounds in Kabul, in the villages of Algeria, in the slave trade in Sudan, in the bloody diamond mines of Sierra Leone, and in the homes and streets of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran. The Islamists' hatred of the United States is based on fear, and that fear is rooted in their fear of the woman in Algeria who, at the risk of having her throat cut, refuses to wear the veil; or the writer who is murdered in Tehran while translating the Declaration of Human Rights; or the Afghan crowds who flooded the streets of their ruined cities as the Taliban fled. The fear is not merely of American might but of the influence of American culture on people in their countries. They are afraid of the innumerable people, such as my former student, who feel closer to strangers living thousands of miles away than to the despots who rule their land in the name of their religion. And so the Islamists hate them and their supposed allies across the oceans.

We have not encouraged the more democratic-minded people in the Muslim world.

Thus terrorized, their existence in danger, the Islamists turn to violence. The worst forms have been against progressive men and women—Muslim and non-Muslim—in their own countries who have become critical of the reactionary norms, who today ask for reform and a different way of viewing Islam. The more critical the people in Muslim societies become, the more vicious the Islamists will be. The Islamists see that the only true alternative to their system is democracy, which they identify with the West. That is why they are afraid of the West and why they want to destroy it.

WHETHER IN POWER or in opposition, Islamists target Western culture in the name of whole peoples. But, if this claim were true, if all Muslims desired to be ruled by religious laws, then there would have been no need for states like Afghanistan and Iran to arm themselves against their own citizens: against unveiled women; unruly youths holding hands in public; against novels, films, music. Today, there is not one country in the Muslim world where there does not exist conflict and tension, not just between moderate and fundamentalist versions of Islamic rule but between the proponents of secularism and democracy and the supporters of theocracy and Islamism. In Egypt, democratic-minded individuals such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim are jailed, and human rights organizations are closed down. In Bahrain and Kuwait, there is the ongoing struggle over the right of women to vote. In Iran, former radical Islamist revolutionaries, progressive students, and secular intellectuals are jailed for quoting Western liberal thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Karl Popper. In countries from Pakistan to Malaysia there are daily debates, and at times bloody battles, over the Muslim soul.

Still, commentators in the West seldom differentiate between the people of the "Muslim world" and their self-proclaimed representatives. So crimes committed against these people are repeated three times: once when they are forced into submission, once when they are represented

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DEVON BOWMAN

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through the very forces that oppress them, and once when the world talks about them in the same language and through the same images as their oppressors. And it is that last crime that helps explain why Muslim anti-Americanism has been growing. As in all great tragedies, we must also look to our own hubris.

For two decades, questions of Islam and terror, us and them, who hates us and who likes us have been posed in the wrong context—on the assumption that the enemy of my enemy is my friend—and have led us to the wrong solutions. If the Americans have not treated the more democratic-minded people in the Muslim world as their allies, then who did they choose? This story is fraught with ironies: Today's predicament, after all, is partly the result of America's success in creating a Muslim "green belt" against communism in the Middle East in the 1980s. The United States, caught by a false sense of immediacy and crass pragmatism, helped the Muslim fundamentalists it now confronts in the wastelands of Afghanistan. America's new allies, such as Russia, and old friends, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia—which have helped fund the fundamentalists—are directly responsible for the present tragedy.

This alliance with dubious friends has forced Western governments to close their eyes not only to these transient allies' brutality against their own people but also to their acts of terror against Americans and other democracies in the West. Over the past two decades, European governments have reacted to terrorist regimes like those in Iran and Iraq with mild rebukes and critical "dialogues." The United States has also underestimated threats of terrorism against Americans and others. The most obvious examples are Lebanon in 1982, the Khobar Towers in 1996, the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, and the bombing of U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998. In all these cases, Americans either took hasty, insufficient action or no action at all.

Such weakness has dismayed the democratic-minded people within the Muslim world and created contempt for the United States among its enemies, who felt bold enough to publicly boast of their actions without fear of reprisals. In 1987, Mohsen Rafiq-Doust, then head of Iran's revolutionary guards, articulated this contempt when he publicly boasted that "both the TNT and ideology that blasted four hundred U.S. officers and soldiers to hell in Lebanon were ours." After the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden was quoted in *The Washington Post* with a similar boast: " 'We believe that the defeat of America is possible, with the help of God, and is even easier for us—God permitting—than the defeat of the Soviet Union was before.' "

The problem, of course, goes deeper than America's shortsighted policies. It is rooted in a cynical attitude toward those whom Harvard's Samuel Huntington calls "the rest," as opposed to those who are privileged to be born in the "West." This attitude is prevalent not just in government but in the media, academic, and policy worlds. Namely, that the United States should not support democratic forces in the Muslim world because people in the region don't really aspire to democracy. This assumption allows Western governments and businesses to justify their relations with the most oppressive regimes. They can live with such allies and their abuses because they know that these allies are basically different from them, that what they share are not common values but common interests. Human rights have no place in such dealings. It is not enough that people in those countries should be robbed, but they should be robbed because they deserve it.

Afghanistan is a good example. The United States has had three recent openings to help move that traumatized country toward pluralism. The first was when, after the September 11 attacks, the United States had to choose as its main political ally either the Northern Alliance—greatly hated and feared by the majority of Afghans for its atrocities against them in the 1990s—or the more democratic forces gathered around the former king. Given the Northern Alliance's military power, the United States could not completely rule it out, so the wisest move would have been to support an alliance of the two; instead, the United States chose the Northern Alliance alone. The second opportunity came during the *loya jirga* in June 2002, when 80 percent of the delegates supported the democratic forces. Again, the United States capitulated to the extremists. Although Hamid Karzai was elected, key Cabinet seats, including Defense and Judiciary, have gone to the extremist forces. Many brutal warlords have taken advantage of the situation and are responsible for numerous murders, assassinations, and fatwas against women and progressive forces. The third opportunity to effect democratic change is taking place now, during the debate over the creation of a new constitution. Because of the presence of so many extremists in the government, the possibility of a democratic constitution is severely compromised.

Similarly, the United States in the '80s encouraged and supported Iraq in its war against Iran, not considering that, no matter how terrible the Iranian regime, Iran was still a more open and flexible society than the one created by Saddam Hussein. It was obvious that a semi-victory for Saddam would not make him more open to the West. But the United States still fanned the flames of old animosities between the Arabs and Iranians, ultimately leading the United States itself to fight two wars against Saddam.

But elite America's refusal to believe in the possibility of genuine democracy in the Muslim world is only part of a larger, flawed Western vision. Equally bad is the fact that the Islamists, more or less in the same manner as the communists before them, have become popular among America's intellectual leaders, most emphatically in the field of Middle Eastern studies. Unlike realpolitik American policymakers and businessmen, who merely ignore fundamentalists' cruelty, these leftists often proclaim solidarity with the Islamists' anti-American impulse. In the strange world of Middle Eastern studies, any attempt to condemn gender apartheid is branded an imposition of Western values, the voices of prominent clerics who oppose the politicization of religion are ignored, and the secular dissidents are dismissed as Westernized and

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therefore inauthentic. A return to roots has become fashionable, but those roots have been redefined not as poetry and philosophy but as stoning and flogging women. A Saudi princess advises us to mind our own business, this is how Arab women like it; an Iranian despot tells us about Western decadence; and an American professor at Duke University, Miriam Cooke, comments that "when men are traumatized [by colonial rule], they tend to traumatize their women." Dominant theories on colonization exploit the guilt of the victors and resentment of the victims to form a new and more dangerous form of neocolonialism, denying the victims freedom in the name of Asian values, Islamic democracy, and cultural relativism. According to these experts, people living in countries with a majority Muslim population have no choice but to live under some form of the Islamic law. At best, these laws could be modified under what they claim to be an Islamic democracy. One could of course ask them, "If you wish to implement the Sharia law in moderate form, how do you more moderately stone a woman to death?"

The truth is not as the academics say. Islam today is used as a political tool and an ideology by Islamists against their own peoples, and as such has little to do with real Islamic traditions and culture. What we call Islamic fundamentalism, for lack of a better word, is a modern phenomenon, in the same way that fascism and communism, both products of the West, are modern. It takes its language, goals, and aspirations as much from the crassest forms of Marxism as it does from religion. Its leaders are as influenced by Lenin, Sartre, Stalin, and Fanon as they are by the Prophet. Today, fundamentalism's main targets are women, culture, and minorities, whose suppression it justifies in the name of Islam, thereby proving that both totalitarianism and democracy know no cultural or national boundaries.

I SHOULD HAVE told my former student in Iran not to be surprised at the solidarity demonstrated by the Iranian people for the Americans. They understand who their true allies are. Democratic values and principles, for which so many millions of lives have been lost, did not always exist, and there is no guarantee they will always remain. Like hothouse flowers, they are fragile and need the right kind of light and nourishment to survive. Every time you deny this right to another, you deny it to yourself. The existence of the average American citizen, like the average citizen of Tehran or Kabul, depends on a vague concept she cannot fully define called democracy. But how can you exchange the gifts of culture and principles with others when you do not believe they deserve or understand them? To win this war, the Americans need the courage of their convictions, the belief that the Declaration of Human Rights is not a Western conspiracy to impose its values upon others. They also need to recognize that today, as in the Soviet bloc before, the people living under totalitarian rule are democracy's most important potential allies. Not only should they and their representatives be supported, but their human rights must be at the center of negotiations with their governments.

No one knows whether democratic objectives will be realized. The "ordeal of freedom," to borrow from Saul Bellow, is very difficult to face. But the fact that these aspirations have been desired and imagined—not only now but for more than a century and a half—by the peoples living in the different Muslim societies, means they have a chance to be actualized. No one can take a people's dreams of a better life away from them without paying a high price. Democracies in the West have to support the aspirations of those fighting for democracy in the Muslim world, and, if Americans have become too cynical to do so out of idealism and compassion, then they should do it for the urgently pragmatic reason that their own survival, it is now unmistakably clear, is also at stake. ■

Bush, closet liberal.

Regime Change

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

"IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES," the conservative intellectual Richard Weaver wrote half a century ago. The truism comes to mind as another group of conservative intellectuals, this one guiding foreign policy inside the Bush administration, prepares to launch a war in the Middle East—not for oil or geopolitical advantage but on behalf of an idea. The idea is liberalism.

According to President Bush, "Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause," and, as such, he routinely casts the impending war as an effort to bring democracy to a land that has known only dictatorship. Nor, in Bush's telling, will America's duty be discharged when Iraq subsequently has a decent government. Instead, he suggests the war will be the beginning of a campaign that will "bring the hope of democracy . . . to every corner of the world." If this sounds familiar, it's because it almost exactly echoes Woodrow Wilson's pledge to "make the world safe for democracy." Which stands to reason: In word, if not yet in deed, Bush is becoming the most Wilsonian president since Wilson himself. True, Bush has fallen short of his moralistic rhetoric in postwar Afghanistan, and many in his administration are Kissingerian devotees of realpolitik. Nonetheless, the man who entered office pledging to focus on narrowly understood "vital interests," is rapidly being transformed into a democratic crusader. He, more than his left-leaning critics, is harnessing American power to liberal ends.

The adjective Wilsonian is today shorthand for a brand of artless universalism, a Kantian worldview that places too much faith in international treaties and organizations. But, in truth, there were two Woodrow Wilsons. The first staked his reputation on the League of Nations and the good faith of the international community. The inheritance of this Wilson has

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been passed down from generation to generation, from those who insisted during the cold war that the United States act only in conjunction with the "world community" to those who insist we do the same today.

But there was another Woodrow Wilson—the Wilson that pledged to make the world safe for democracy and vowed that America would "spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness." This Wilson believed that international organizations were only as trustworthy as their members, that the character of governments was the key to peace and stability. "A steadfast concert of peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations," he said in 1917. "No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants." The legacy of Wilson the democratic crusader was also passed down from generation to generation—from Harry Truman, who argued that "totalitarian regimes ... undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States," to John F. Kennedy—before being put to rest in the jungles of Vietnam.

Yet this legacy was resuscitated during the 1970s, when a group of cold war liberals condemned both the reflexive opposition to U.S. power that had seized the Democratic Party and the cold-blooded realpolitik that defined the Republican Party of Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger. Harkening back to Wilson the democratic idealist, these "neoconservatives" promoted a vision of U.S. power that was universalistic and unapologetic. Appalled by the "hostility to one's own country and ... derision of the idea that it stands for anything worth defending," as elite wisdom was summarized by *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz in 1977, the neoconservatives advocated a robust approach to the international scene—an approach that championed the cause of what Harvard sociologist Nathan Glazer at the time called "the shrinking island of democracies in the world." Initially, this worldview drew neoconservatives to Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, a hawkish Democrat for whom future Bush advisers such as Elliott Abrams and Richard Perle worked, and then to Ronald Reagan, who as president translated many of their ideas into policy. But, with the end of the cold war and the presidencies of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, neither of whom had much use for their brand of democratic idealism, the vision fell out of favor once more.

STRANGELY, THE TASK of reviving it has fallen to a president who campaigned on adopting a more "humble" approach to the world. Bush's choice for secretary of state, Colin Powell—famous for his admonition that the United States should intervene abroad only when the "cold calculus of national interest" is at stake—had opposed intervening to halt the slaughter in Bosnia and even opposed reversing Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Yet today Powell forcefully makes the case for "liberating" Iraq. He does so not because he has had an epiphany about Saddam Hussein; he spent months arguing against this war, too. He does so because he lost the argument to the administration's latter-day liberals, particularly Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who has been urging the president to topple Saddam since September 11, 2001.

Indeed, Bush did not create his foreign policy out of whole cloth. Never before, not even during the Reagan administration, have Wolfowitz and his fellow neoconservatives shaped policy as they do today. Controversial Reagan and Jackson veteran Abrams was recently appointed to oversee Middle East policy at the National Security Council, while other neoconservatives staff Vice President Dick Cheney's "shadow" national security council. The Pentagon has become a virtual think tank for like-minded thinkers, among them Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, Richard Perle (in an advisory capacity), and Wolfowitz, whose lectures on democracy have been embedded—almost verbatim—in the president's National Security Strategy. Consequently, the influence of Wilsonian ideas may be gleaned in everything from the administration's plan to use Iraq as a pivot for democratizing the Arab world to its broader strategy of transforming rather than coexisting with totalitarian regimes.

As for the president himself, by his own admission, the September 11 attacks transformed his worldview—so much so that within months he had enshrined "regime change" and its goal of liberal democracy in official policy. Today, he pledges that the United States "will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe." Bush has offered two explanations for this. First, democracy makes strategic sense: "Free societies do not intimidate through cruelty and conquest," Bush says, "and open societies do not threaten the world with mass murder." Writing in *Foreign Policy*, the historian John Lewis Gaddis summarizes the president's logic this way:

> [T]he persistence of authoritarianism anywhere can breed resentments that can provoke terrorism that can do us grievous harm. There is a compellingly realistic reason now to complete the idealistic task Woodrow Wilson began more than eight decades ago: the world must be made safe for democracy, because otherwise democracy will not be safe in the world.

The strategic imperative of democracy has become particularly acute in the Arab world, where repression has fueled Islamist terror and where today there is not a single democracy. Unlike his predecessors, Bush insists the "requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa and Latin America and the entire Islamic world," and it is in the Islamic world where his administration has concentrated its democratization efforts.

According to members of the Bush team, those efforts now constitute a "fourth track" of U.S. policy in the Middle East, alongside the war on terror, the conflict with Iraq, and the Arab-Israeli peace process. In recent months, this track has yielded major addresses on the subject by the Bush team's key players, the creation of a U.S.–Middle East Partnership Initiative, which will channel tens of millions of dollars to the region's indigenous democracy advocates, and a plan to use much of the $1 billion in annual aid the United States provides

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Arab nations for political development. The administration has also unveiled a $5 billion program, the Millennium Challenge Account, which explicitly ties U.S. aid to political reform; rejected Egypt's bid to attend last year's meeting of the Community of Democracies; censured Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for his treatment of democracy activists; created a radio network to bring accurate news coverage to the Middle East; and loudly insisted on democratic reform as a precondition for an independent Palestine.

But, in the president's telling, all this amounts to a mere appetizer. The real pivot for democracy in the Middle East will be democracy in Iraq. The Bush team sincerely believes that the vista that "the first Arab democracy," as Wolfowitz calls it, could open up will transform the region—further encouraging already liberalizing regimes like Morocco and Qatar, pressuring the theocrats in Iran and Saudi Arabia, and demonstrating to the Arab masses that there exists a third way between Islamism and repression. In Iraq, which possesses an urbanized middle class and once boasted some of the highest literacy rates in the region, a U.S. military occupation may well make this vision a reality. Will it transform the Arab world? Maybe. Maybe not. But the impulse behind the strategy reflects the highest-minded of liberal ideals.

IN FACT, WHILE Bush contends that exporting democracy is sound strategy, he also offers a classical liberal justification: No people should be governed without their consent. Or, as he puts it, "No people on earth yearn to be oppressed, aspire to servitude, or eagerly await the midnight knock of the secret police." But here we pass through the looking glass. For, while even Cheney has begun to speak the language of Eleanor Roosevelt, liberal Bush critics like Harvard Professor Stanley Hoffmann, who only a few years ago was championing humanitarian interventions and "morality in foreign policy," cannot fathom why the United States would want to change "countries that have no past experience of democracy and where repressive regimes face no experienced or cohesive opposition." Conservatives used to delight in bashing the Clinton administration for its "Wilsonianism." Now liberals bash the Bush administration for the same sin.

A more principled critique of Bush's expansive worldview derives from the suspicion of power inherent in contemporary liberalism. "The vision laid out in the Bush document," Hendrik Hertzberg writes in *The New Yorker*, "is a vision of what used to be called, when we believed it to be the Soviet ambition, world domination." True, Bush offers a vision of U.S. power that is robust and perhaps even "hegemonic." But Bush also insists, "[W]e do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create ... conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty." There is no contradiction here. Bush rejects the complacent assumption that democratization can be left to either the market or to the multilateral organizations of which any tyranny may be a member. Instead, he argues that the United States has long been the principal agent of democracy and that, more than ever, "the advance of human freedom ... now depends on us." This is a thoroughly Wilsonian proposition—which also happens to be true.

Finally, there is the "what-about-Turkmenistan" argument, which accuses the administration of practicing double standards in its support for democracy abroad. But, in a war on terrorism, making common cause with, say, Central Asian dictators who repress their subjects but offer U.S. forces access to the Afghan border makes a certain amount of moral sense. Paying due respect to reality means recognizing that a military defeat for the world's premier custodian of democracy is a setback for the cause of democracy as well. This is why Franklin Roosevelt enlisted the Soviet Union in the war against Hitler and Harry Truman enlisted then-authoritarian South Korea and Taiwan in the war against communism. What makes absolutely no sense is the Bush team's habit of standing by repressive regimes like China, Saudi Arabia, and Syria that have not, in turn, stood by us.

In Afghanistan, too, the administration has betrayed its rhetoric by skimping on reconstruction and impeding international peacekeeping. But, in postwar Iraq, Bush cannot skimp. Which brings us to the only real flaw in Bush's vision—its implementation. Already, the State Department's Middle East hands have launched a campaign to short-circuit any attempt to democratize Iraq and thereby assuage the fears of authoritarian Egypt and Saudi Arabia. "The bureaucrats responsible for this plan [to impede Iraqi democratization]," complains leading Iraqi democracy advocate Kanan Makiya, "are drawn from those parts of the administration that have always been hostile to the idea of a U.S.-assisted democratic transformation." The plan Makiya refers to was devised by the CIA and the State Department. It calls for an American military governor to rule Iraq for up to one year with the aid of an Iraqi advisory council, while a judiciary committee drafts a constitution and plans elections for a national assembly. But the plan also calls for keeping Saddam's infrastructure of terror in check—merely replacing the top two officials in each of his ministries. Meanwhile, the administration has been courting exiles, such as former Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations Adnan Pachachi, known less for their opposition to Saddam than for their opposition to *his* opposition.

All this calls into question the sincerity of the president's rhetoric. After all, how will already anti-American Arab populations react when they awaken to find that the United States has brought to Iraq not democracy but yet more of the same? How will they react when they discover that, for all the Bush team's talk of democratizing, it won't even democratize a country under U.S. occupation? The reasons for deciding to go to war with Iraq are as momentous as the decision itself. And, at least as Bush has articulated them, those reasons commit the United States to extend the benefits of democracy to the Arab world. The president should follow through on the essentially liberal vision he has laid out. Then he should complete the job Wilson began. ■

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Against liberal purity.

Absolute Zero

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

Liberalism as a philosophy can deal with tough truths, even if many people who call themselves liberals cannot.

IN THE EARLY '70S, Israel may have been just one U.S. election away from strategic disaster. In November 1972, Americans reelected Richard Nixon over George McGovern as president. The following October, after a surprise attack by several Arab armies, President Nixon decided on a massive airlift of military equipment to Israel. He also decided that U.S. planes should fly the equipment directly into the country with only one refueling stop in the Azorean islands. Nixon wanted to send a signal that Soviet military deliveries to the Arabs would not be allowed to dictate the outcome of the fighting. When, in the face of European pressure, the Portuguese hesitated about granting permission for the refueling, Nixon fired off a nasty note to them. A few hours later, the Portuguese granted permission to refuel the transport planes.

Now, consider how an isolationist-minded President McGovern—a World War II pilot who was, nevertheless, suspicious of military force as a diplomatic tool; a man who wanted the United States to "come home" from its commitments to allies abroad; a man who throughout his career, compared with other senators, demonstrated a particular sympathy for the Arab world—would have reacted during the fast-moving events of that October. McGovern would have likely hesitated about opening such an air bridge to Israel or, at best, would have dispatched many fewer arms. The result would have been a Soviet-supported military campaign of attrition by Egypt against Israel that would have found sympathy in Europe and the rest of the world—which, in the midst of an oil crisis, was seeking to placate the Arabs. Such a circumstance would have been catastrophic for Israel, and protracted war would have prevented the United States from reestablishing relations with Egypt and Syria.

McGovern's brand of liberalism, still alive albeit not dominant in the Democratic Party, is of a kind with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's: It is a liberalism safe and snug in its moral absolutes, blissfully void of the analysis required for a messy, violent world governed by *who can do what to whom*, which makes it not very moral at all. Such analysis requires working within a given situation and plotting out the real-life consequences of acts. Having withdrawn 500,000 troops unilaterally in three years from Vietnam, would it have been prudent to capitulate entirely, as McGovern wanted in 1972? How would that have affected America's reputation for power in China, the Soviet Union, and the Middle East? And today, having come this far, how would an indefinite postponement of military consequences against Iraq—as Chancellor Schroeder recommends—affect the behavior of regimes from Morocco to Pakistan, whose own survival depends upon an accurate measure of the West's resolve? A liberalism that will not face up to such questions cannot be moral.

Nixon implicitly grasped Raymond Aron's dictum of the 1930s that a good policy is measured by its effectiveness, not its purity. Aron was reacting against France's policy of disarmament and negotiation in the face of growing Nazi aggressiveness. Aron, as well as a host of philosophers going back to Thucydides and Hobbes, understood that liberty develops less from moral reflection than from difficult political choices made by rulers acting out of self-interest. As the Danish classicist and historian David Gress observes, liberty rose in the West because it served the interests of power.

Indeed, it was Cardinal Richelieu's naked pragmatism that fostered the creation of the modern bureaucratic state in France, which for the average citizen represented an improvement over the individual arbitrariness of feudal barons. As Tocqueville explains in his introduction to *Democracy in America*, European kings and queens, as their societies became more complex, needed to distribute authority among new institutions both to keep themselves from being overwhelmed and to more effectively profit from the dynamic new commerce of the "lower orders." Power and principle are inextricable: In our own day, the Hague War Crimes Tribunal, a body particularly cherished by liberals, is an outgrowth of Western military strength and the West's victory in the cold war, which

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DEVON BOWMAN

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stripped international bodies of their heretofore morally compromising Soviet component.

And winning the cold war, remember, demanded impossibly cruel choices. In the '70s, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, serving President Gerald Ford upon Nixon's resignation, wanted to continue limited arms sales to Ethiopia, despite the human rights abuses of the new dictator, Mengistu Haile Mariam. Though Kissinger's reasoning was questioned by liberals at the time, his effort turned out to be tragically appropriate to the liberal historical project. Kissinger assumed that if the United States stopped all arms deliveries to Mengistu, the dictator would hand Ethiopia over to the Soviets, who were more than willing to supply him with weapons to fight the Somalis. When Ford was replaced by Jimmy Carter in 1977, the new president refused to send additional weapons to Ethiopia; nor would he help the Somalis, whose irredentist struggle was providing an alternative means of pressuring Mengistu. Carter justified these acts in the name of liberal morality, but the results were neither liberal nor moral: They led to a Marxist satellite state in Ethiopia that over the years killed hundreds of thousands in Soviet-designed collectivization schemes and precipitated more than one million deaths from starvation.

LIBERALISM MUST FIRST survive before it can prosper. To survive it needs to be the belief system of a great and dynamic power. The peoples of the Balkans are not adopting democracy and free markets by accident: They were equally enthusiastic about fascism in the '30s, when Hitler was dominant and the West showed a lack of resolve. They are adopting our values because of our political and strategic victory over the Soviet Union. And that victory, the fruit of both Democratic and Republican administrations, was achieved through individual policies, often secret and violent, that were not always consistent with moral imperatives. A policy that had claimed to be all morality all the time would have constituted not morality but zealotry.

This is truer following the cold war than during it. That is because weapons technology and terrorist tactics have erased the safety once afforded by great oceans: We are as close in military-operational terms to the Middle East as the Austrian Hapsburgs were to the Ottoman Empire or the United States Cavalry was to the Plains Indians. We no longer have any room to retreat, yet the public demands protection so that its way of life—which also happens to be the liberal way of life—survives. Thus, periodic, preemptive attacks are destined to become incorporated into our foreign policy pantheon. Any Democratic presidential candidate who disagrees with such an assumption will probably not be trusted with our national security by swing voters.

Liberalism is a philosophical notion, not a legalistic one. It doesn't demand that every place in the world follow our model of democracy—or even that all of our allies do. However, it does demand the gradual and prudent expansion of civil society, minority rights, and the rule of law throughout the world. And the world is a big place. While in many instances human rights are advanced by peacefully applying pressure for more democracy and economic integration, there are other instances where human rights are advanced solely by punishing what Hobbes called the "unjust." That could mean going to war for regime change in Iraq or condoning a military coup of the kind that took place over three years ago in Pakistan, which dramatically reduced the level of intercommunal fighting in Karachi. It might even mean sanctioning the ruthless campaign against terrorism waged by Alberto Fujimori in Peru—a campaign so successful in returning the country to some semblance of normality that the citizenry later had the luxury of removing Fujimori himself, thus restoring real democracy. I am not saying liberals should be proud of Fujimori, but they should understand the necessity of his actions considering Peru's circumstances at the time. Indeed, take Colombia, which, partly because it lacked a Fujimori, has throughout the decades been more hesitant in its battle against terrorism, and, as a result, its violent agony goes on and on. Liberalism as a philosophy can deal with such tough truths, even if many people who call themselves liberals cannot.

Smart liberals know that not all dictators are like Saddam Hussein. They are aware of distinctions and gradations. To them, it is reasonable that, were a dictator like Hosni Mubarak or Pervez Musharraf to take power in Iraq, they would bring a vast improvement in human rights and civil society. Smart liberals understand why, throughout the developing world, and particularly in the bleaker reaches of the ex-communist one, nominal dictators like Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and some real ones like Augusto Pinochet have been openly admired for the economic prosperity that they brought to their nations, stabilizing and—as a consequence—ultimately liberalizing them.

LIBERALISM IS NOT in danger of being toppled as the centerpiece of U.S. power. But the liberal left is in danger of ceasing to represent it. That is because the left has always excelled at questioning and exposing the abuses of power, an admirable vocation but one not primarily suited to the signal foreign policy crisis ahead. That coming crisis is not about critiquing systems of power that do exist but about erecting new ones that don't yet, systems of power necessary to fill the void that will be created by discredited and decaying regimes in the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Latin America. And the reestablishment of sheer order, which must exist before there can be any meaningful freedom, has always been a conservative enterprise conducted for the sake of liberal ends. There is nothing contradictory in that.

After all, conservatism is not a belief system in the way liberalism is. It has no particularly inspiring vision of the world. Its job is to *conserve* what already exists or restore what has recently existed. That is why conservatism thrives in times of danger and anarchy. Winston Churchill was an Edwardian-era reactionary who rescued civilization from the brink. Federalists like John Adams and Alexander Hamilton often used the grimmest and most pessimistic arguments concerning human nature to erect a liberal constitution, just as Edmund Burke used conservative arguments to defend liberal government in England.

Likewise, reestablishing central authority in places like

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Iraq—and perhaps in Syria, Libya, and other countries that will experience self-inflicted turmoil in the years to come—will not be done by merely encouraging elections or by funding local journalists to do investigative reporting about the imperfections of the new regimes. Far more importantly, it will demand new, bilateral military relationships and the training of new, local intelligence services by Western nations rather than by the Russians, Chinese, and North Koreans. For it is intelligence services, originally designed by the East Germans, that keep alive the worst of the cold war–era autocracies in the Middle East, and the fancy conferences about democracy attended by liberal elites cannot change that. Without the application of U.S. power and intimidation, there will be no liberalism in places where it currently does not exist. Moreover, in the building of these new, ultimately democratic orders, one will likely hear the name of Lee Kuan Yew mentioned as a role model by local leaders more than the name of Nelson Mandela. Liberals may have to get used to that, too.

The ejection of the Red Army from a few Central European countries a little more than a decade ago did not mean the world would henceforth march in unison toward universalist principles. It didn't mean that constitutional-law experts from U.S. universities would become more important than soldiers. It didn't mean the replacement of destructive hatreds and passions with Western rationalism. Of course, that should now all be obvious. But liberals, even after September 11, 2001, still have trouble adjusting to the fact that the end of the cold war has merely set the context for new, violent struggles in which U.S. power will periodically be the determining element—just as it was in October 1973 in the Middle East.

The military interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, while justified and admirable, were not truly a test for liberals. The Serbs had no weapons of mass destruction with which to threaten our troops. And, because the human rights issues in the Balkans were clear-cut—while the strategic benefits of the interventions were less so—the interventions became particularly popular among a group of American and European intellectuals who were comfortable with U.S. power so long as it was seen to be selfless and thus pure. This was also the reason why someone like German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, a radical anarchist and pacifist in his younger years, could masquerade as a realist during the air bombardment of Serbia and Kosovo. If only, in some of their erudite journals and newspaper columns, liberals had argued as passionately and relentlessly for the Clinton administration to take effective retribution on the attackers of Khobar Towers, the East African embassies, and the USS *Cole* as they did for intervention in the Balkans and Rwanda: Perhaps then, John Ashcroft wouldn't be in the business that he is.

But, now and forever more, the risks of intervention will be much greater than in the Balkans. "Homeland security"—*yes*, the phrase reeks of paranoia and parochialism—will, henceforth, always be central to the foreign policy debate. There never will be—and never could have been—any purity in foreign policy. Can liberals handle that? Or will conservatives like President George W. Bush grab the mantle of historic liberalism? ■

A liberal's war, too.

Against Innocence

BY LEON WIESELTIER

PERCEPTIONS, PERCEPTIONS. The great debate about the war in Iraq—does anybody imagine that the United States has dispatched 180,000 troops to the Gulf not to send them into battle?—has dissolved into another debate about debates, another collision of perspectives, Washington, Paris, Berlin, New York, Brussels, Vilnius, Riyadh, the streets, the halls of power, as if there were no real threats that must be met, no conclusive answers that can be given to some of the urgent questions, and all that is needed now is a tolerance for other people's opinions. But it is not intolerant to believe that one is right and the other is wrong, if one can defend one's view. My own view is that it is quite easy to defend the necessity and the justice of separating Saddam Hussein from his lethal devices, which is the same thing as separating him from his power, which is the same thing as aiding in the formation of a democratic government in Baghdad. The only genuine solution to the problem of the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological arms is political development. It comes in many kinds, and often with assistance from the outside. (There is imperialism, and there is assistance from the outside. It is not naive to maintain the distinction, unless one thinks that the imbalance of power is itself an evil; but then one has surrendered the discussion of politics.) And the theory of deterrence cannot be responsibly applied to a dictator who has already used weapons whose use is famously not rational.

Morally, there is no significant difference between Halabja and Srebrenica. Both places were the sites of genocidal crimes that required decisive action by the international community, that is, by an American-led "coalition of the willing." There is a difference in scale, though, and in danger: Unlike the villain of Srebrenica, the villain of Halabja is in the position to perpetrate the same atrocity again, and worse. How can any liberal, any individual who associates himself with the party of humanity, not count himself in this coalition of the willing? So never mind the future of NATO, and all the other conference-building measures; there are many thousands of lives at stake in the outcome of this debate, in the disposition of Iraq's arsenal. Dominique de Villepin, in a breathtakingly obtuse phrase that brought down the house at the Security Council last week, called for "disarmament through peace." There speaks the collapse of modern memory. But it is the other way around, sucker: peace through disarmament. How can any liberal think otherwise?

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The difficulty now is that the magnitude of American power seems to be obscuring the magnitude of American liberalism. The United States is the strongest state that has ever existed. It has no rival, and it will have no rival for many decades. And its capabilities seem to be blinding people about its purposes. How can such a powerful country not adopt its own power as its cause? How can such a mighty republic not be what Raymond Aron called "the imperial republic"? It is not surprising, surely, that the overwhelming dominance of the United States, in the aftermath of the cold war and the recent revolution in technology, makes many people around the world uneasy, and inclines them to overlook the considerable inhibitions on our pleasure in the use of our power that our culture has always imposed upon us, either in the form of internationalist decency or in the form of isolationist indifference.

It certainly has not helped that the Bush administration, and particularly the Rumsfeld Pentagon, has permitted itself fantasies of omnipotence. I refer not to its notorious doctrine of preemption, which in the case of certain threats really is nothing more than prudence. (Be early to kill a man who is coming to kill you, runs an ancient Jewish adage.) The theory of just war—not that war requires the approval of professors, but we must be thoughtful—demands that a threat be "imminent" before you preempt it; but its notion of imminence is based on the old clarities of armies confronting each other on battlefields in the light of morning. What was disturbing about the Bush administration, rather, was its dream of the militarization of space, and the restoration of missile defense in its most theological version, and the "revolution in military affairs," which was merely a transposition of the stupid technological utopianism of the 1990s to the realm of military strategy. In the National Security Strategy that was released in September 2002, the president declared that "our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States." So we will never again be equaled: From the standpoint of American interests, this is nothing more than an American government properly pressing its advantage; but there is an eschatological echo in the language, a temerity about history, as if the experience of nations has once and for all been transformed, and the Hobbesian problem has been forever solved, and we are Leviathan.

Yet the disagreeable fact, the unpleasant truth that has disappeared into the Pentagon's trance, is that the most potent country in the history of the world is not omnipotent. Quite the contrary. We are stumbling again and again upon the limits of our power. There is September 11, and anthrax, and our disgraceful failure to find Osama bin Laden; and there is North Korea. The Korean crisis is particularly instructive. Pyongyang's sins of proliferation are significantly greater than Baghdad's sins of proliferation, but we will satisfy ourselves with diplomacy. We will not use force. Are we hypocrites, then? Not exactly. The reason that we will not use force against North Korea is simple. It is that we cannot use force. If the United States will punish North Korea militarily, North Korea will punish South Korea militarily. The prospect of such a catastrophe is unacceptable. And so we are, except in the insane circumstance that Kim Jong Il prepares to launch a nuclear weapon, deterred. But we are not yet deterred by Iraq, which is why we must act while we can act. The ironic implication of our Korea policy for our Iraq policy is to justify it: Saddam Hussein is already strong enough to constitute a menace, but he is not yet strong enough to constitute a deterrent. The bad news, of course, is that the nations of the world have also remarked upon the thwarting of American power in East Asia. The Korean crisis has become a garish advertisement for nuclear proliferation.

So the United States finds itself in a peculiarly antithetical situation. We are more dominant than we have ever been and we are more vulnerable than we have ever been. We are fearless and we are afraid. There is a basis in reality for both these feelings, and it is not a simple matter to adjust them to each other. George W. Bush's Lucchese swagger is not doing the trick. Neither is the outrageously sectarian spirit in which the Bush administration is conducting its business. The president is correct in his conviction that history has summoned him, that he must defend the country with ferocity against its enemies, that greatness is demanded for such a task; but you cannot govern as Winston Churchill some of the time and as Grover Norquist most of the time. You cannot unify the citizenry for your foreign policy and divide the citizenry for your domestic policy. In an hour of peril it is not asking too much of the president to find a few moments away from politics. Are we fighting evil abroad? Then we must show goodness at home; not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is the stirring thing to do, and in this fight we must be stirred. What sort of time is this to worry about the rich?

The president's unfortunate combination of bigness and smallness is reflected in the incoherence of his administration's arguments for the war. Four motives have been given, by various sources with varying emphases, for our decision to depose Saddam Hussein: proliferation, terrorism, democratization, oil. I have said that I concur enthusiastically with the argument from proliferation, and I concur also with the argument from terrorism. Even if a "direct link" between the Iraqi regime and Al Qaeda has not been demonstrated, it is ridiculous to suppose that Saddam Hussein is prevented by any scruple from assisting terrorists, or that terrorist attacks against American and Israeli targets offend his secular Baathist conscience. He has his own delight in jihad. As for democratization, I do not think that it alone would justify the war, but the war will not be won unless a degree of democratization is achieved; and if there is such a thing as collateral damage, there is also such a thing as collateral humanitarianism, as the destruction of the Taliban in Afghanistan showed. But then there is the tasteless subject of oil. I do not agree that we are going to war for economic reasons, but it would be foolish to pretend that Iraqi oil does not intrude at any point upon American planning for Iraq after Saddam Hussein. Iraq's oil reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia's. The energy business has always cared more about stability than about democracy. Will Tommy Franks hand over the

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wells and the fields to a bunch of romantic reformers in the hope that the profits will build schools and libraries? I do not mean to be conspiratorial about the oil companies, merely unillusioned. Anyway, the influence of the American oil companies is owed to the incontinence of the American way of life. It will be a delicious moment when the president discovers that his love of democracy does not comport altogether comfortably with his love of energy; a moment of truth for this entire administration.

So can a liberal support this president in this war? I do not see why not. The United States, its needs and its duties, is larger than any of its leaders. The war against Saddam Hussein is just, and it is truly a last resort. (Saddam Hussein has been in violation of the Security Council for twelve years. It is his unrestrained contempt for the United Nations, and not the Bush administration's restrained contempt for the United Nations, that may destroy the institution.) There were some Republicans who despised Bill Clinton as much as some Democrats despise George W. Bush, but they supported the American interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo, and thereby they rose above politics to history, above sectarianism to Americanism. I cannot imagine any strenuous construction of liberalism that does not include the injunction to fight terror and to fight genocide. Liberalism is not a philosophy of innocence; and it should make tyrants quake, not smile. ■

Bush's illiberal power.

Force Full

BY SAMANTHA POWER

JULY 11, 1995: The U.N. safe area of Srebrenica was under savage Bosnian Serb attack. Some 40,000 Muslims were on the run. Based in Sarajevo, I heard the sound of NATO planes roaring overhead. By the time I pried open the shutters, I caught only the backsides of the F-16s. They suggested, in their haste and numbers—18, all told—a newfound determination. Theirs was a rescue mission.

Later in the day, I heard the planes again, this time heading in the opposite direction. They had been to Srebrenica and were returning to their base in Aviano, Italy. They had plinked a single, geriatric tank. I know I imagined it, but I swear the tails of the planes were drooping in humiliation. Over the course of the next few days, Bosnian Serb forces systematically murdered some 7,000 Muslim men and boys. The U.N. safe area was no more.

Such was the fate of liberalism and American power in the 1990s. American might would not be exerted on behalf of anything besides the most narrowly defined American interests: physical security and economic prosperity. In the sloth induced by our seeming invincibility and unprecedented wealth, the United States retreated. By the mid-'90s the Powell Doctrine had acquired a partner: Thomas Friedman's McDonald's Doctrine. Since no two countries with golden arches on their skylines had ever made war on each other, it would be left to Big Macs to prevent gross violations of human rights. By the end of the fat decade, the fall of the Wall, which had once seemed to signal the triumph of freedom, had come to represent the ascent only of the free market. With an invisible hand doing the liberalizing, American politicians would risk nothing, American citizens would sacrifice nothing, and American companies would benefit. Foreign policy would be carried out less by the State Department than by the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and Treasury. In the liberal progress narrative, soon to become an alibi, universal human rights were inevitable, and history's end was nigh.

It was a lost decade. A journalist friend of mine traveled with Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Europe in 1993 for one of his fruitless Balkan negotiations. When the official delegation stopped at Shannon Airport for refueling on the way home, Christopher, not generally sociable, surprised my friend by pulling up beside him at the bar. "What can I get you?" the burly bartender asked the secretary. Christopher responded, "I'd like an Irish coffee, please ... but hold the whiskey and make it decaf." When I think of the '90s, I think of Christopher's Irish coffee. The United States wanted American power to defend human life, but only on the condition that we hold the Americans, hold the power, and, in the end, hold our principles.

The very qualities that made liberals prone to care about evil seemed to make them incapable of coping with it. A liberal was, as Robert Frost observed, "a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel." Liberals resisted black-and-white characterizations, sought nuance and understanding, and dithered. They were also torn by the dual impulses of protecting human rights on the one hand and restraining U.S. hegemony on the other.

To be fair, it is not always obvious how best to advance human dignity. Would the Chinese be better off if Congress denied their country permanent normal trade relations? Would lifting an arms embargo against Bosnia's Muslims have meant fewer concentration camps? What principles should replace the Washington Consensus on economic development? But this uncertainty over means served as one excuse among many for slighting or scrapping the principled ends.

Now that Bill Clinton's invisible hand has been replaced by George W. Bush's iron fist, however, we see the opposite problem: an overreliance on power in the name of principle. With the United States overwhelmingly strong but notably vulnerable, the question today is whether the United States is structurally capable of using its tremendous power for the good of others.

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FOREIGN POLICY IS an explicitly amoral enterprise. Only presidential leadership or domestic political mobilization can override the system's innate orientation toward short-term self-interest. It took the September 11 attacks for someone—Bush was always a closet moralist—to step forward. After the squeamish moral relativism of the '90s and the worrying ascent of copperhead isolationism within the Republican Party, there were two attractive aspects to Bush's approach: He saw that evildoers littered the planet; and he saw that, like it or not, if the United States didn't become police chief of the world, Americans, too, would pay a price. Some in his administration even realized that the long-standing dichotomy between American moral values and American strategic and economic interests was both false and unsustainable. The world and the United States were more dangerous places if tyrants flourished, AIDS went untreated, and corporations exported human rights abuses that were outlawed at home. There would be blowback.

But, oh dear. While the Bush administration has issued an unprecedented pledge to promote human rights—its National Security Strategy document mentions "human rights" five times, "human dignity" nine times, "liberty" eleven times, "democracy" 13 times, and "freedom," the favorite formulation, 46 times—it has exerted its power in the most illiberal ways. Here are the '90s, inverted: power without the liberalism, without the humility it requires in acknowledgment that none of us possesses absolute truths. If Clinton acted as though the United States could do no right with power, Bush behaves as though the United States can do no wrong. Bush has said, unabashedly, "[W]e go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world." In offering moral advice—always a dangerous, presumptuous business—the Bush administration has been too self-assured. "Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place," Bush says, citing a "single surviving model of human progress." American officials bellow not just practical help but epistemological answers, often in religious, even messianic terms. And, for a country in need of intelligence and law enforcement cooperation, they are starkly exclusionary. "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you're with us, or you're with the terrorists," the president has said. The "we can all get along" self-soothing naïveté of recent years has given way to the dark assumption that none of us can get along. Bush's National Security Strategy made an overt appeal for imbalance of power: "Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States." Critics of U.S. decision-making became opponents. And opponents and competitors become enemies.

The exceptionalist impulses behind Bush's choices have been with us for a long time. What distinguished this round was that by 2002 the checks that could usually be counted on to rein in a president's militant moralism had vanished. On Capitol Hill, the House International Relations Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had gone out of fashion; Banking and Appropriations were in, and the globe-trotting internationalists of yore had been replaced by a younger, untraveled, uncurious lot. They wouldn't challenge a wartime president's worldview. Congress nodded or whimpered. It did not meaningfully dissent, a devastating abdication for the branch responsible for investigation, legislation, and financial control. The media withered as well, becoming the home for Bob Woodward–style stenography rather than Woodward and Bernstein–style scrutiny. And the American people remained relatively insulated from the vitriolic anti-Americanism bubbling abroad.

Other checks also faded. The one thing guaranteed to reduce legislative deference to an overzealous executive is American casualties. But, thanks to U.S. technological supremacy, the American soldier seems to have, very nearly, grown immune. The Gulf war, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan showed that the United States could make war virtually from the skies.

So, too, went the check once performed by our European allies. We needed them less and thus learned we liked them less (funny how that happens). For the first time in 50 years, they saw that linking their fates to ours rendered them more, not less, vulnerable to attack. As our claims about Saddam Hussein's threat went unheard by them, their criticisms slid off of us. The French, we noted, often seemed unable to distinguish the Republican Party from the Baath Party.

And international institutions certainly could not restrain American will. Clinton administration officials had said the United States would act "multilaterally when we can and unilaterally when we must." Without saying so explicitly, the Bush administration shifted the presumption with watershed effect: The United States will act unilaterally when it can, multilaterally when it must—on issues like trade, nonproliferation, and law enforcement. With the unsigning of the Rome Treaty on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the rejection of the Kyoto Protocol and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty—coming on the heels of the prior American refusal to pay its U.N. dues and its prior rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the land mines ban, and other international treaties—the United States came to be seen less as it sees itself (the cop protecting the world from rogue nations) than as the very runaway state international law needs to contain.

Now it's true that the mere fact that something is multilateral doesn't make it good or wise: Libya is running the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and, until last week, Iraq was scheduled to chair the U.N. Disarmament Conference in May. The U.N. Security Council is anachronistic, undemocratic, and consists of countries that lack the standing to be considered good-faith arbiters of how to balance stability against democracy, peace against justice, and security against human rights. But, for all of the flaws in the international system, it remains a fact that securing international consent or participation increases a policy's legitimacy in the eyes of others. Robert Kagan is right that weak states need multilateralism more than strong states, but strong states fighting asymmetric threats—Al Qaeda operates cells in more than 60 countries—

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need weak states to help them out, and such strong, needy states benefit enormously from enforceable rules of the road.

But the biggest flaw in the U.S. approach (this was true of Clinton as well) is not its oft-lamented unilateralism. It is something much harder to cure: its à la cartism. From Washington's point of view, everything is to be assessed anew and apart. Our policies will attend to human welfare in one part of the globe but not in others. We will bomb Kosovo because of Slobodan Milosevic's treatment of the Albanians, but we will refrain from even mentioning Chechnya with Vladimir Putin. We will liberate the Kurds in Iraq, and yet, in exchange for the affection and bases of Turkey, we won't trouble Ankara about its abuse of Kurds. We will gripe about the shortage of democracy in Palestine, but not in Pakistan. We will lambaste Yasir Arafat, investing significant political capital in regime change, but we will only ritualistically take issue with Ariel Sharon. We will call upon South Africa to lift its trade barriers, but we will maintain farm, textile, and steel subsidies. One doesn't have to fetishize consistency, a known impossibility in political life, to note that systematic and sustained inconsistencies of this magnitude leave others confused and us disdained. Different circumstances and security threats require different responses, but it is incumbent on American officials to explain the discrepancies rather than to pretend they don't exist.

And then there is our amnesia. Americans who take office restart the clock with themselves. This is not just an American phenomenon: Who but the losers of history ever acknowledge mistakes? But any slate cluttered by sins of omission and commission is wiped clean. We can promise $15 billion for AIDS prevention and treatment and blot from memory American threats to impose sanctions on countries that produce generic AIDS drugs. We can go to war against the Taliban, never acknowledging our previous aid to the regime—we offered a grant of $43 million as late as May 2001—for its help quashing opium production. And it goes without saying that the CIA-assisted coups in Guatemala, Chile, and the Congo; the bombing of Cambodia; and the support for right-wing terror squads in Latin America were simply dark chapters of a distant past. This White House, the most secretive of the last century, has drastically cut back the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the ability of outsiders to explore and expose past policies.

Others don't see a clean slate. And, when it comes time for them to judge our case for war in Iraq, they will do so on the basis of a much thicker historical and systemic assessment of U.S. foreign policy. In this assessment, intentions, because they are unknowable and untrustworthy, are irrelevant. Abroad, they judge what they can see: means and results; and our policy choices in other arenas have harsh ripple effects on perceptions of our Iraq policy. The multidimensional picture is less persuasive than the single-issue picture: The United States has never publicly acknowledged its prior support for Saddam's genocidal regime (U.S. aid to Iraq doubled the year *after* he gassed the Kurds). The United States will not subject itself to the jurisdiction of the ICC, so only it will decide whether it has violated the Geneva Conventions as it bombs Iraq. American officials are reportedly abusing Al Qaeda detainees or "rendering" them to countries where they will be tortured ("We don't kick the [expletive] out of them. We send them to other countries so they can kick the [expletive] out of them," one American official told *The Washington Post*). And, although the U.S.-led wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan improved life for the majority of citizens in each, the U.S. habit of hit-and-run left the fate of the people to the Europeans and to the warlords, neither of whom inspire local confidence. When Bush puts forth arguments about Saddam's threat to the United States and to Iraqis, is it any wonder that most believe the president has ulterior motives? If the roles were reversed, and the French were making such claims, would we believe them?

In the '90s, there was scant presidential leadership and insufficient domestic political mobilization for foreign policy grounded in human rights. Now there is a new language out of Washington—a moralism—but, as applied, it is undermining both the principles it espouses and, in the long term, the security it seeks to enhance.

Why do they hate us? President Bush is right about some America-bashers when he answers, "They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other." Many terrorists are indeed nihilistic, anti-modern, or threatened by liberal values. But they depend for their sustenance on mainstream anti-Americanism throughout the world. Some anti-Americanism derives simply from our being a colossus that bestrides the earth. This resentment may be incurable. But much anti-Americanism derives from the role U.S. political, economic, and military power has played in denying such freedoms to others.

U.S. foreign policy has to be rethought. It needs not tweaking but overhauling. We need: a *historical reckoning* with crimes committed, sponsored, or permitted by the United States. This would entail restoring FOIA to its pre-Bush stature, opening the files, and acknowledging the force of a mantra we have spent the last decade promoting in Guatemala, South Africa, and Yugoslavia: A country has to look back before it can move forward. Instituting a doctrine of the mea culpa would enhance our credibility by showing that American decision-makers do not endorse the sins of their predecessors. When Willie Brandt went down on one knee in the Warsaw ghetto, his gesture was gratifying to World War II survivors, but it was also ennobling and cathartic for Germany. Would such an approach be futile for the United States? A recent trip to Rwanda suggests such gestures can make a difference. In 1994, the Clinton administration's only response to the extermination of 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu was to insist on the withdrawal of U.N. peacekeepers who were sheltering Tutsi there. In 1998, Clinton became the first American president to visit Rwanda, and he issued something of an apology: "All over the world there were people like me sitting in offices, day after day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable ter-

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ror." I, like many, found his words lawyerly and evasive. Yet many Rwandans today can recite the apology verbatim. They say they were floored: He called the crime genocide, he paid his respects, and he took a measure of responsibility. In anticipation of another Clinton visit last fall, the Rwandans repaved the road connecting the airport with Clinton's hotel. Since his trip, Rwandans have begun calling it Clinton Boulevard.

U.S. foreign policy should inject *first-order concern for human rights into every policy decision*. American decision-makers must understand how damaging a foreign policy that privileges order and profit over justice really is in the long term. American decision-makers in every branch of government, in every department (the Pentagon frequently undermines State Department stands on human rights), and in every bureau should ask: What are the likely human consequences of this arms deal? Of this aid package? Of this oil contract? Of this Security Council vote? Of this treaty rejection or unsigning? Of this photo op with this abusive foreign leader? Every decision would require a "full cost accounting"—in which the harm to and welfare of foreign citizens would constitute a key variable in the cost-benefit calculus. Even in the event that the real world, with its terrorists and hostile proliferators, intrudes, the radical shift of America's presumption would earn the United States far more trust in times of emergency. Prioritizing human rights doesn't tell a policymaker what to do. Often it can point in two very different directions, and experimentation will be required. Sometimes, human rights may be promoted more smoothly if we remain uninvolved in a democracy struggle, such as in Iran today, where U.S. interference would be unwelcomed by democracy activists. Preparedness to use American power to advance human rights will be counterproductive unless it comes coupled with a sensitivity to local dynamics and aspirations.

And the American approach must *cease its reliance on gratuitous unilateralism*. We make rules and create international institutions precisely in order to bind states when their short-term interests would otherwise lead them toward defection. The United States is willing to bind itself to the World Trade Organization, because it knows it benefits more than any other country from free trade, but not to the ICC, because there is no good selfish reason to expose American citizens to external scrutiny. But the truth is that only U.S. resources and leadership can turn such institutions into forces for the international stability that is indispensable to U.S. security. Besides, giving up a pinch of sovereignty will not deprive the United States of the tremendous military and economic leverage it has at its disposal as a last resort.

American officials must also understand that *their words and tone matter*. It is essential, when a direct threat to U.S. security demands a response, that human rights not be invoked as a rationalization for a security operation, as is being done today regarding Iraq. Such appeals discredit both human rights and security claims. Barking orders and holy truths at a skeptical international audience is extremely counterproductive. Genuine liberalism must supplant the liberal-sounding nationalism of today.

À la cartism undermines America's ability to do what it wants when it wants. The United States has thus far lost its campaign to persuade its allies of the merits of preemptive war with Iraq not because of the dearth of smoking guns. Few who oppose the U.S. attack do so because they disagree with Bush's characterization of the Iraqi regime. Most do so because of what they take to be the character of the U.S. regime. American officials have been engaged in one argument—about Iraq. Our NATO partners, Russia, and other nervous states have been mouthing words about Iraq, but they have in fact been engaged in an entirely different debate—about U.S. foreign policy. The battle for hearts and minds was lost before it was waged.

A White House serious about prevailing in the war on terror will need hard power. This is a fact that the Clinton administration was too slow to grasp. The United States is clearly better off now that Al Qaeda cannot operate freely in Afghanistan. The threat posed by weapons of mass destruction will not go away with a greater sensitivity to human rights. But, in using hard power, it is essential for the long struggle that the United States win international support and demonstrate its legitimacy. This requires giving before we demand. Doubling foreign aid is progress; proposing $15 billion for AIDS is extraordinary—but none of these gestures gets at the contradictions at the heart of U.S. foreign policy.

When Bosnia was on fire, those of us who argued that U.S. power should be harnessed for good were doing so for the sake of the Bosnians. We squeezed our humanitarian case into the framework of the day, making unconvincing arguments about how the war would spill over and destabilize Greece and Turkey and perhaps even result in a Balkans-wide war. We also argued that bystanding in the face of genocide against Muslims was radicalizing secular Muslims in Bosnia and even in the wider Islamic world. As it happened, we were one for two: No war broke out south of Macedonia, but Al Qaeda did in fact turn the neglected state of Bosnia into a training base.

The truth, however, is that in those days the best argument for doing the right thing was simply that it was right—an argument rarely made in the postmodern '90s. These days, though, the best argument for marrying power and principle is that power exerted in a unilateralist, morally selective, ahistoric, unprincipled fashion is not simply harming foreigners; it is gravely undermining U.S. security. The terrorists will thrive in a sea of anti-Americanism. That sea will not be drained by adding another $46 billion to the U.S. defense budget. It will not be drained by training more Arabists in the U.S. government. Liberals and conservatives, hawks and doves alike, must see that American power *can* be a force for human rights around the world, *and* greater human rights enjoyment is an indispensible requirement for the preservation of U.S. power.

Embedding U.S. power in an international system and demonstrating humility would be painful, unnatural steps for any empire, never mind the most potent empire in the history of mankind. But more pain now will mean far less pain later. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

A Dilemma of Old

REVIEWING *ABOUT SCHMIDT* in January, I mentioned that I had not read the Louis Begley novel from which the screenplay was tenuously derived. Several people have written to say that, though they liked the film and they had read Begley's approval of it, I ought to read the book. I'm thinking it over.

The correspondents' friendly suggestion is, of course, a return to the perennial question of adaptation, the degree of responsibility of a later work to its source. Every such discussion is a matter of instances, not of precepts. Who cares if an unimportant novel is altered for screen use? Who is not offended when a good book is trashed on screen? The thorn in this prickly matter is the alteration of a valuable novel when the resulting film is also valuable. The thorn is even sharper in this instance because Begley himself said about the screenplay by Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor that he "would have been proud to have written their book."

ABOUT SCHMIDT

LOST IN LA MANCHA
(IFC)

His comment almost states my dilemma. I have in my head one work, a film called *About Schmidt*: do I want in my head a related work in another medium? If I do read the novel and think it as good as my correspondents say, haven't I shoved myself into a small torture chamber that I could have avoided? Since the film is itself of consequence, why do I have to put in my mind an earlier version that, at best, can only make me admire Payne and Taylor's skill in changing it? I have trouble enough in admiring Arrigo Boito's adaptation of *Othello* for Verdi; do I need more such quasi-grudging admiration?

The oldest burden of this kind that I remember is *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. When I was in high school, I read John Buchan's novel of that title and thought it a terrific thriller. Four or five years later, along came Hitchcock's film. I remember being excited that Buchan's book had been filmed by a director already established as a master craftsman. Then I saw the film, and was gripped by it as if two hands were on my shoulders holding me fast. It, too, was terrific. But it didn't even have the (literal) thirty-nine steps in it, and it took some bits from another Buchan novel. In order to justify using the title, the adapters, Charles Bennett and Alma Reville, had made it the name of a spy organization. So in the decades since I have had two versions of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* in my head: the original, though I have never re-read it, and the film, which I have seen six or eight times. Because the novel came first and was so strong in itself, I have always had a tinge of discomfort about the film, the thought that it is very good considering that it altered the novel I had loved. Do I need to do that to *About Schmidt*?

The problem arose long before film itself was invented—in the theater. Bernard Shaw's first piece of theater criticism was a review of Henry Irving's *The Merchant of Venice* in 1880. After noting the alterations that Irving had made in the text, Shaw wrote: "Mr. Irving calls his arrangement of *The Merchant* an 'acting version.' What does he call the original?" I'm glad that I couldn't have seen Irving's production: I might very well have admired it and would thus have had to balance Irving against unaltered Shakespeare long before film adaptation added to the problem.

I don't advance an argument against reading. I'm not proposing that the ideal filmgoer is ignorant of every good novel or play that has ever been published and that might be adapted. I suggest only that balance can be difficult if it is necessary, and that sometimes an evasion is a comfort. A film may be well able to stand on its own without comparison to its source. To dwell on changes from the origin can load the film with obligations that may be aesthetically irrelevant. Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* is drastically different from the medieval *Nibelungenlied*, but do those who know the epic arbitrarily derogate the *Ring* because Wagner departed from the earlier text? Payne and Taylor don't have to be the equals of Wagner in order for us to allow that a work in one art can stand on its own apart from its source in another art.

In 1926, before sound arrived in films, Virginia Woolf mourned—in these pages, by the way—that films spelled out famous novels "in words of one syllable." Yet she foresaw that "when some new symbol for expressing thought is found, the filmmaker has enormous riches at his command. The exactitude of reality and its surprising power of suggestion are to be had for the asking." That symbol or series of symbols has been found—indeed, was found before 1926—and has often exalted film adaptations of novels. The exactitude and the power that Woolf desired in films have often overwhelmed us. *About Schmidt* is not a pinnacle in cinema history, but it is certainly good enough, especially with Jack Nicholson's performance, to exist without being primarily considered as an adaptation. Surprisingly, happily, Begley's own statement is a vigorous vote for this view.

Yet I hurry to add that I would not want to surrender the right to criticize adaptations even when the resulting films are good, if such criticism seems relevant. All of the above is only one view of the problem. Scrambling, I might take refuge in Whitman—"Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself"—even though, as he said, he contained multitudes, and I, alas, do not. But, like most other people, I do contain some conflicting opinions, conflicts that I can't resolve. This is one pair.

I'm still thinking it over about Begley.

LOST IN LA MANCHA (IFC) is a documentary about the filming of an adaptation—the attempted filming. Terry Gilliam had written an adaptation of *Don Quixote* and was to make the film. Gilliam, American though he is, was one of the Monty Python group and, among other things, did the animated bits in their sane insanities. He also made *Time Bandits* and *Brazil*, so he is clearly a director with nerve and wit

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(despite his ghastly *Adventures of Baron Munchausen*).

For ten years Gilliam had been struggling to get his *Quixote* launched and was finally set to begin in the fall of 2000, in Spain. Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe, documentary makers, were apparently on hand from the beginning to chronicle the adventure. The project fizzled, so Fulton and Pepe used their footage to demonstrate the hazards of film-making.

But it doesn't. The film is not, as the publicity says, "a powerful drama about the inherent fragility of the creative process." It does not expose the tumult of problems, quarrels, differences, and sentimentalities that often bedraggle the making of a film. We see a good deal of the hubbub, but Gilliam's film floundered for a reason that had nothing to do with artistic quarrels. Quixote was to be played by the eminent French actor Jean Rochefort, who had spent months learning the English of the role. As Rochefort boarded the plane in Paris for Spain, he felt pain in his back but kept on. After five or six days of work, he had to go back to Paris for examination. A few days later Gilliam and Co. learned that Rochefort had a herniated disc in his spine and would be out of action for several months. The film had to close down.

So this is not, as vaunted, a documentary about a film destroyed by temperaments and tizzies. It is the account of a medical catastrophe that could have spoiled the opening of a supermarket. ■

JED PERL ON ART

Hash of the Titans

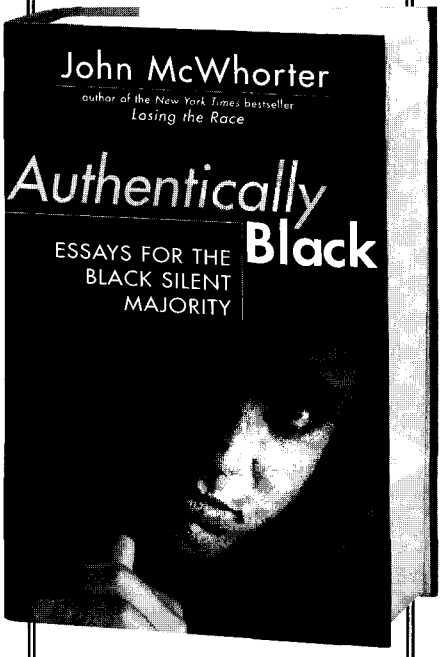
"MATISSE PICASSO," the exhibition that has now arrived at the Museum of Modern Art after packing in the crowds at Tate Modern in London and the Grand Palais in Paris, begins as a sort of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* for culture vultures, a study in male bonding in the artistic stratosphere that features the somewhat older, more formal Matisse and the younger, unabashedly bohemian Picasso. Later on, when the show really gets going, museumgoers are supposed to be agog at what amounts to a clash of the titans with avant-gardist sparks flying, a High Modernist love-hate-love kind of thing. You can see that John Elderfield and Kirk Varnedoe, curators with the Museum of Modern Art, and the four other curators from England and France who collaborated on "Matisse Picasso" were delighted with their vision of psychodrama among artistic giants.

MATISSE PICASSO
Museum of Modern Art

Indeed, the organizers were so excited about bringing together some of the grandest monuments of modern art that they seem to have overlooked the awkward fact that Matisse and Picasso were by and large going their separate ways. This can't-miss show misses by a mile. While there are a few points in "Matisse Picasso" where things do begin to click, most of the juxtapositions feel tenuous and arbitrary. When you shove Picasso's genius, which is perhaps best described as a kind of transcendent ingenuity, against Matisse's Apollonian lucidity, both artists have a way of looking their worst. And yet people are going through the show all smiles, wrapped in the brand-name sophistication of "Matisse Picasso" the way they might be wrapped in their Armani or their Prada.

This exhibition, which is at MoMA QNS through May 19, is engineered to lock up contemporary taste. We do want the show to work. We want to be transported to High Modern heaven. There are some beautiful moments, of course. At the beginning, when Picasso and Matisse are both reacting to Cézanne, their work does harmonize. A little later, when Matisse is experimenting with a Cubist grammar, he quite naturally strikes us as being in sync with Picasso. At the very end of the show, the juxtaposition of Matisse's paper cutouts and Picasso's cut metal sculptures creates an atmosphere of empyrean elegance. And even though much of the rest of the exhibition is forced or silly or dishonest, the public is determined to leave with a satisfied feeling. The

"Like Bill O'Reilly with a Ph.D."
—*Black Issues Book Review*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Authentically Black
ESSAYS FOR THE BLACK SILENT MAJORITY

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—*Weekly Standard*

✶

"McWhorter [is] in a long and honorable tradition of dissent, one composed of both liberal and conservative strains."
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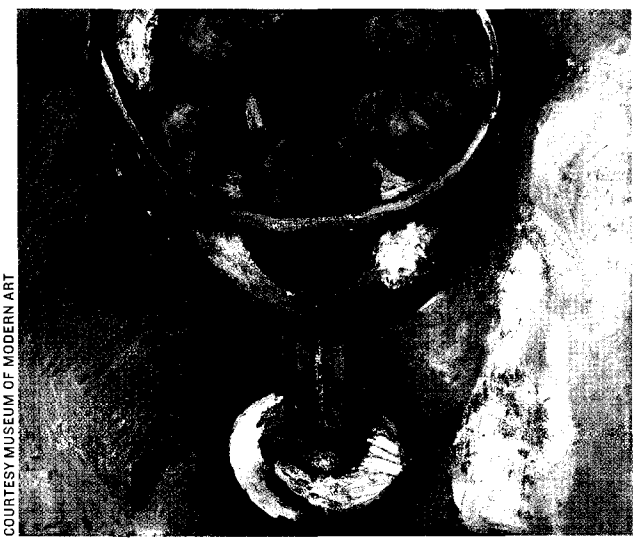
museumgoers who have bought their tickets through Ticketmaster are unlikely to imagine that the Museum of Modern Art, of all places, doesn't know what to do with Picasso and Matisse. The artists and the critics who see themselves as defenders of quality and tradition are aware that "Matisse Picasso" looks a lot like the sort of classic show that they say they want, and so they are reluctant to ask for more. As for the faddists who control the art world and would not know a good painting from a bad one, they are glad to salute some golden oldies, which they probably regard as the visual equivalent of easy listening and in any event are quite sure have nothing any longer to do with the making of art.

The story of the long and frequently wary friendship between these two men is not enough to hold this show together, but it is the story that pulls people in, and it is what they will remember long after the visual dissonance has faded. The friendship began in 1906, when Picasso was in his mid-twenties and Matisse was moving into his late thirties. They were both receiving much-needed support from the adventuresome American clan of collectors that consisted of Leo and Gertrude Stein and their older brother Michael and his wife Sarah. The story ends nearly half a century later, in the years leading up to Matisse's death in 1954, when both Matisse and Picasso were living in the south of France, and they may well have enjoyed looking into each other's eyes and knowing that they, and they alone, had achieved the sort of international fame that in their youth had belonged to literary figures such as Hugo and Tolstoy. In those mid-century years, when Picasso was visiting the aged Matisse, both artists were glad to believe that they were the two giants left standing, and they might have given the nod to an exhibition such as "Matisse Picasso."

There were in fact occasions that brought their work together, including side-by-side shows at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1945. The prospect of that London event provoked a fascinating prediction from Matisse regarding the effect that their paintings would have when seen in close proximity. (Hilary Spurling, who is at work on the second volume of her biography of Matisse, quotes the passage in an article in the February issue of *Art in America*.) Contemplating a face-off with Picasso that was not entirely unlike the one that we now have in "Matisse Picasso," Matisse worried in a letter to his son that the show would be like "being shut up with an epileptic. How solemn (if not stuffy—at any rate to some) I'm going to look alongside his pyrotechnics." That hellish mismatch is not precisely what you get in "Matisse Picasso," but this show is no prettier. Matisse would probably be glad to know that Picasso gets the worse of the bargain; his work does indeed look hyperactive, too anxious to please.

Anyway, Matisse went on to say that he would "have to go through with" the Victoria and Albert show. He probably knew that however he fared in this competition with Picasso, they would together dominate the School of Paris; and although the urge to knock off the competition, if indeed that was what they intended, is just about the least interesting aspect of Matisse and Picasso, it is a side of their personalities that makes them perfect subjects for the star-system art world of our day. "Matisse Picasso" is a show in which many of the things that make the work of the two artists convincing—the tug with tradition; the wide-ranging curiosity about the work of their contemporaries; the incremental developments that provoke startling, evolutionary leaps—are downplayed in favor of shows of bravado and egotism, of face-offs and rip-offs. Reflecting on the exhibition during an appearance on *Charlie Rose*, Pierre Schneider, the author of what is probably the finest of all studies of Matisse, wondered how we could "reduce the richness of these two brilliant minds to an obsession with each other." How, indeed.



COURTESY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

HENRI MATISSE, *Bowl of Oranges*, 1916

"Matisse Picasso" has a blowhard, *Masterpiece Theatre* aura. The curators are too much in love with the kind of complicated-friendship-that-survives-everything plot that Hollywood used to adore, and too quick to locate artistic motivations not in the artists' working processes but in the outer conditions of the artists' lives, and too clever when it comes to squeezing the artists' admittedly contrasting personalities for an attraction-of-opposites excitement that rapidly degenerates into cliché. I know that there are some serious theories of artistic development that put a good deal of emphasis on psychological drives, on the need to exceed your father or to grab the attention that you were denied as a child. And there is no doubt that since ancient times students of the arts have been fascinated by what can seem to be the almost fable-like quality of certain artistic rivalries. I do not doubt that psychological dynamics were at work in the first decade of the twentieth century, when Picasso and Matisse watched with bated breath to see what the other guy was doing with the lessons of Cézanne. Yes, Picasso was tempestuous and nihilistic and Matisse was circumspect and methodical. When all is said and done, however, the desire to paint a better painting surely precedes the desire to paint a painting that is better than your friend's painting. The theme of "Matisse Picasso" really has nothing much to do with art; we could just as easily be talking about athletes or politicians.

This exhibition has been in the planning stages for a long while, and it may be that the organizers found themselves pumping up the psychodynamics as they made their pitch to all the lenders and funders and marketing people that such a project must have on its side. At MoMA QNS, the everything-comes-in-pairs conceit seems in danger of getting a bit wacky. On the audio tour, John Elderfield, the Modern's chief curator at large, is joined by Kirk Varnedoe, the former chief curator of painting and sculpture at the museum, who exchange their impressions under the guidance of Glenn Lowry, the museum's director. A chat among friends, I suppose; or among rival talking heads. A symposium that is planned for MoMA features an entire day of lectures done by art historians appearing in pairs. Of all the people involved in this project, it is John Golding,

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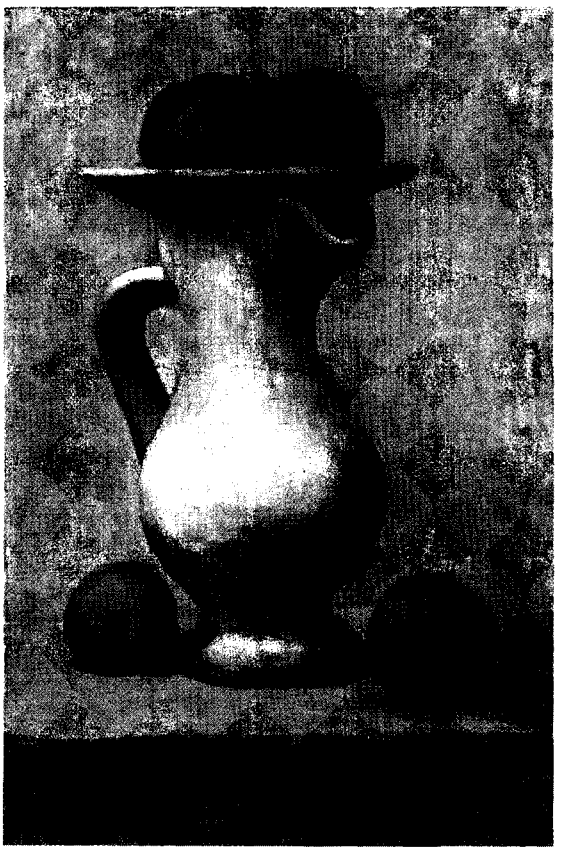
the English artist and art historian who is credited with originating the conception, who seems to have kept his head. In his best work in the catalogue—especially a discussion of several still lifes, including the Matisse *Still Life with Basket of Oranges* (1912) that was one of Picasso's treasured possessions—Golding emerges as a highly civilized guide who makes a few telling observations about some works of art that he loves and leaves it at that. Golding's British colleague on this project is Elizabeth Cowling, an art historian. The French third of the team consists of Anne Baldassari, a curator at the Musée Picasso, and Isabelle Monod-Fontaine, who is deputy director of the Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne. So we have six curators in search of two artists, a multinational curatorial entity that, it should probably be pointed out, was in some sense pre-empted by the art historian Yve-Alain Bois, who organized "Matisse and Picasso," a show with a very similar theme that made an equally sour impression, at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth in 1999.

There is no denying that "Matisse Picasso" raises more questions about the nature of inspiration and influence than any exhibition could hope to answer. These two artists took on the challenges of so many different media and operated so close to the edge of what is possible in the arts that even the most lucidly focused effort to understand their work can itself feel like an exercise in brinkmanship. The questions that Picasso and Matisse ask themselves (and perhaps each other) do not yield easy or definitive answers. To what extent can distortion have an emotional impact? How far can you go in intensifying the character of a form through simplification before you lose the form entirely? No two artists have put the fluid relationship between art and nature to more varied tests. And few artists, in their efforts to continuously re-imagine the eye-filling and mind-filling experience that a work of art can be, have looked so long and so hard at the art of other cultures and at the art of their predecessors and at the work of their contemporaries.

The thunderous juxtapositions in "Matisse Picasso" are meant to give us a heightened dramatic sense of what these two artists were thinking when they looked at their own earlier work, as well as the work of their predecessors, their contemporaries, and each other. When the curators hang Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), with its exaggeratedly angular figures and its shattered, fractured space, next to Matisse's *Bathers With a Turtle* (1908), in which the boldly yet gently abbreviated modeling of the figures is set against expanses of the most luminous, penetrating greens and blues, we do see two ways of giving the monumental figure, that most venerable subject, a modern weight and intensity and speed. We recognize that Matisse and Picasso both want to achieve an unequivocal full-out power, and we can see that Picasso identifies that power with ferocity while Matisse aims for an impacted repose. Both artists understand that ambiguity, whether spatial or anatomical, can be an essential rhetorical device.



PABLO PICASSO, *Still Life With Pitcher and Apples*, 1919

These two paintings are grand performances, summing-up achievements—and that is where the trouble with their juxtaposition begins. While similar modes of thinking may have been involved in their creation, these paintings finally persuade us through their singularity; and when they are hung together, although they speak to us, they do not speak to each other. The face-off produces no vibrations, except in some kind of bland, interior-decorator way. Time and time again in this exhibition, I wished that I could spend a little more time with Picasso or Matisse, and a little less time with the two of them together. On a long wall where the curators have hung portraits that range in date from 1907 to 1916, the back-and-forth between Picasso's tough, angular expression and Matisse's more curvaceous play can almost make you seasick.

The show is ruled by a maddening one-from-column-A-one-from-column-B mentality. We begin with two beautiful self-portraits from 1906. Then we see two Arcadian visions, Picasso's *Boy Leading a Horse* (1906) and Matisse's *Le Luxe I* (1907). These are among the pairs that make deep iconographic sense. Many of the pairs, however, are merely fetching. Matisse's *Bowl of Oranges* (1916) and Picasso's *Still Life with Pitcher and Apples* (1919) seem mostly to be together because they are the same size and have a similar number of objects. Maybe somebody thought it was droll to have apples and oranges side by side. There is something essentially undisciplined about the way the show has been organized. When the curators cannot match paintings or sculptures that were done at the same time, they match works done ten or twenty years apart; the leafy forms of Picasso's *Woman in the Garden* (1931–1932), a bronze version of a welded metal original, look sensational next to Matisse's *Creole Dancer* cutout (1950), but the two artists have arrived at their ebullient images in very different ways. Sometimes it seems that if the curators want to include a painting because it is a masterpiece, such as Matisse's resplendently complex *Decorative Figure on an Ornamental Background* (1925–1926), they will pair it with any old thing, which in this instance means a dull Surrealist puzzle, such as Picasso's *Woman in an Armchair* (1927). Occasionally two canvases are put together because one of the artists saw connections, as when Matisse recognized echoes of his *Goldfish and Palette* (1914) in Picasso's even more severe *Harlequin* (1915); but while the connections may be formally and iconographically intriguing, they do not really deepen our feeling for either of the paintings.

What you have here is a rather crude

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model of influence. You take this or that, you put it in your work, and you're done. What the organizers are unable to convey is the extent to which the artist who really knows how to capitalize on an influence exists in a permanent state of susceptibility or receptivity. The influences that matter the most can be so general as to elude our efforts to pin them down, or they can involve adopting elements or techniques in a way that is so bold as to suggest a kind of colonization. Much of what is presented at "Matisse Picasso" as an exchange between these two artists might better be described as a particular instance of a broader climate of feeling or sense of tradition. A lot of what is going on, even in the most seemingly dramatic juxtapositions, is not so much that Matisse and Picasso are watching each other as that they are both interested in another artist. In the beginning that artist was often Cézanne, who taught so many painters to re-imagine the drama of deep space as a drama played out in a shallow or nearly flat space. And when Matisse and Picasso used full-out color, they were probably both saluting Gauguin and Van Gogh.

"Matisse Picasso" aims to keep you amused by rapidly zooming in and out of various periods in the artists' lives, but you are never drawn into the workings of a great artist's imagination in the way that you are in a large retrospective, where developments can be traced year by year, sometimes even month by month. Not surprisingly, some of the most convincing sections of "Matisse Picasso" are devoted to works on paper: the boldly conceived woodcuts from 1906–1908, Neoclassical portraits and figure studies during and after World War I, and studies of the artist and the model from the 1930s. Here we begin to grasp one of the abiding connections between Matisse and Picasso, which has to do with their insistence on always digging into the graphic mainstream of the Western tradition, where figure drawing is the key that unlocks spaces, opens forms, and leads to so many different levels of abstraction and near-abstraction and non-abstraction. Unfortunately, there are not all that many works on paper in "Matisse Picasso." Perhaps they are too modest to accord with the curators' desire to knock the audience over the head.

There is something utterly mainstream about this puffed-up spectacle: it leaves Matisse and Picasso exactly where it finds them. When the curators set Matisse's *The Studio, Quai Saint-Michel* (1916–1917), a painting that can bring Corot's studio interiors to mind, next to Picasso's *Painter and Model* (1928), an architectural maze that is all black lines and white spaces and red and yellow and blue accents, they seem to be asking us to ignore the more obvious association between Picasso's work here and the tough-minded elegance of Mondrian's Neoplastic compositions, which were hot news in the mid-1920s. You cannot expect to have paintings by Mondrian included in an exhibition called "Matisse Picasso," but the curators ought to have done a better job of grappling with the fundamental question of how both Matisse and Picasso related to abstract art. Matisse and Picasso took art to the brink of abstraction but generally not beyond—and yet they both knew how to jump-start their imaginations by responding to the abstract artists who had earlier learned so much from them. By the mid-1920s it is obvious that abstract art, which Matisse and Picasso had provoked, is provoking them. When the curators set Picasso's *Large Still Life on a Pedestal* (1931) next to the Matisse paper cutout *Vegetation* (c. 1951), my feeling is not that Picasso and Matisse are looking at each other but that they are both taking a look at the biomorphic possibilities of abstract art—at Brancusi, Arp, Klee, and perhaps even certain aspects of Kandinsky. Toward the end of the exhibition, when Picasso's cut metal sculptures and Matisse's cutouts are joined to make such beautiful visual music, we are in a realm of near-abstract distillations, a kind of mid-century Parnassus where Arp, Calder, and maybe even Noguchi and Kelly are equally at home.

At "Matisse Picasso," the extraordinarily complicated landscape of twentieth-century art is turned into a cover story about a couple of superstars. In the catalogue, John Golding acknowledges how much Matisse learned about Cubism through his friendship with Juan Gris, "because of the rigours of the younger man's work and mind" and his "fealty to the totality of the painted surface," and yet the show's us-against-the-world thesis excludes Gris, and a lot of other people as well. When we see Matisse's wildly complex *Still Life After Jan Davidsz. de Heem's "La Desserte"* (1915) next to Picasso's elaborate *Mandolin and Guitar* (1924), the real subject here is a mutual interest in the highly formalized still lifes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and I wish something by Braque had been included, because he was the artist who investigated this theme more thoroughly than either Matisse or Picasso and whose architectonic compositions of the early 1920s may have been on Picasso's mind when he painted his most formal still lifes. The last Picasso that we see in the show, *The Shadow* (1953), contains a rendering of what is apparently a Sicilian toy cart that looks like nothing so much as the Etruscan-influenced sculptures of horses that Braque had been making since the late 1930s.

The organizers of "Matisse Picasso" will tell you that they do not claim to deal with all the influences that were at play in Matisse's or Picasso's work, but when they present their two heroes' shared interest in Neoclassicism in the years around World War I without bringing Derain into the equation, they are simply not telling us what happened. The severely yet delicately modeled portraits that Derain did in 1913 and 1914, one of which Picasso owned, were harbingers of Neoclassicism, and they (and Derain's subsequent work) surely fueled the grave naturalism of Picasso and Matisse as much as the two fueled each other. While the prevailing view that Matisse and Picasso were greater artists than Derain is correct, there are many artists who believe that Braque was a more profound painter than Picasso, and in any event there is still a general ignorance in the United States about the achievements of both Braque and Derain. The curators of "Matisse Picasso" are oh-so-proud of their impeccable taste, but if they really knew anything about educating taste they might have considered doing a little more with Braque or Derain. Congratulating the Museum of Modern Art for trotting out some beloved Picassos and Matisses is a little like congratulating the Metropolitan Opera for the announcement of a production of *La Traviata*.

There is a confrontational mood about this entire exhibition that probably has much more to do with Picasso's way of seeing the world than with Matisse's. In his life as well as in his art, Picasso was a man with a taste for dramatic alliances and dramatic breakups, and he clearly saw possibilities in the dialectical theatricality of his lifelong, sometimes electrically charged relationship with Matisse. Elderfield, who has guided the show in New York, is known as an expert on Matisse and organized the Modern's retrospective in 1992, but the idea of juxtaposing the two artists has probably more often than not come from Picasso's supporters. Wasn't Gertrude Stein, who was in Picasso's camp, among the first to endow their contrasting personalities with a mythic dimension? And in the past dec-

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ade or so, as the idea of a face-off between the two has become increasingly popular, the comparison has often been pushed by people who are generally associated with Picasso, including Pierre Daix, a biographer of Picasso and the author of *Picasso/Matisse* (1996); Françoise Gilot, Picasso's companion after World War II and the author of a book rich in anecdote and insight called *Matisse and Picasso: A Friendship in Art* (1990), and of course John Golding, the expert on Cubism who had the idea for the present exhibition.

After Matisse's death in 1954, Picasso was apparently anxious to underscore their supremacy, no doubt as a way of assuring the world that, with Matisse out of the way, there was now only Picasso. He announced that Matisse had left him his odalisques, as if Matisse had made some sort of deathbed gift or put a codicil in his will, and he proceeded to paint a series of variations on Delacroix's *Women of Algiers*, a painting that Matisse had mined in many of his greatest odalisques of the 1920s and 1930s. We can easily make too much of Picasso's getting himself into a Matissean kind of mood, for there was a nihilistic dimension to Picasso's imagination that always made him eager to reject the niceties of influence in favor of something more like theft. Matisse was only one of many artists from whom Picasso stole without giving it a thought. There is a fascinating passage in *At Work in Paris* (Thames and Hudson), a new volume of memoirs by the sculptor Raymond Mason, in which Giacometti is doing his damnedest to keep Picasso out of his studio, because, as Giacometti explains, "When he's in your studio [he] looks at your work not with two eyes but with two cameras, and the next day does the same thing ten times over."

The truth is that Picasso was rarely at his best when he was in his rip-off mode, and this is almost inevitably the case when he was filching from Matisse. In the 1950s, when he attempted to adopt the opulent yet severe effects that are Matisse's final thoughts on the art of oil painting, the results—at least the ones included here, *The Studio at "La Californie"* (1955) and *Las Meninas, After Velázquez* (1957)—are practically buffoonish. While there are some terrific works to be found among Picasso's late studio paintings, they tend to be the ones in which Picasso is looking at Braque's studio paintings rather than at Matisse's; and the fact is that whatever affinities there may be between the later Picasso and the later Matisse, they were ultimately two artists who were going in very, very different directions. In the Cubist years Picasso was arguably the one who was moving the furthest from traditional ideas of genre and style, but in the later years it was Matisse who was tossing out all the old distinctions between drawing and painting, painting and decoration, the sketchbook and the easel, the easel and the mural. At least in the greatest of his late work, such as the enormous group of etchings known as *Suite 347*, Picasso is a storyteller in a sort of personalized narrative mode that does not seem that far from the work of Degas or Goya or maybe even Rembrandt.

I WONDER IF THE CURATORS WHO organized "Matisse Picasso" ever asked themselves why it was that Alfred H. Barr Jr., the first director of the Museum of Modern Art and the guiding spirit behind the museum's seminal exhibitions of both Picasso and Matisse, never mounted a show like the one that has now arrived at MoMA QNS. Such an exhibition might seem to be logical, almost inevitable for the Museum of Modern Art. And yet a visit to "Matisse Picasso" makes it easy to see why Barr never attempted this kind of show. It simply does not work.

Seeing "Matisse Picasso" in New York, which is the final stop on its international tour, can provoke all kinds of thoughts about the relationship that the Museum of Modern Art has had with Matisse and Picasso in the nearly three-quarters of a century since the museum was founded, and they are not thoughts that will make you feel very optimistic about the direction of the museum. While it would be absurd to say that Barr alone placed Matisse and Picasso at the pinnacle of the pantheon of twentieth-century art, there is no question that he and William Rubin, who was his successor as the guiding curatorial force at the institution, played a key role in demonstrating that this art of overarching complexity could be accessible to a large public. Barr and Rubin helped to shape the places that Matisse and Picasso now hold in the public imagination. And Matisse and Picasso recognized the museum's role in their careers. They had never received institutional support in France, and by the late 1930s they could see that with the progressive museums in Germany shut down and chaos overtaking Europe, their best chance for an audience was in America. Barr was on friendly terms with Matisse; Rubin knew Picasso. Matisse was involved in the preparations for his 1951 MoMA retrospective. For decades, Picasso left *Guernica* on loan at the Modern, and he gave the important

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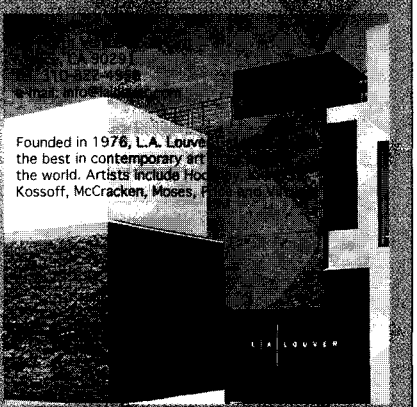

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sheet metal Cubist *Guitar* (1912–1913) to the collection. Barr was responsible for early appearances in English of some of the most important writings by both artists. The Matisse retrospective in 1951 and Barr's accompanying book, *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, presented the Chapel in Vence, which had just been consecrated, as a major new development in modern art. And Rubin's Picasso retrospective in 1980, held seven years after the artist's death but before the opening of the Musée Picasso in Paris, revolutionized our understanding of the phantasmagorical richness of Picasso's work in the decades between the wars.

Barr was a singular figure, a man who made modern art popular even as he laid the groundwork for the most exacting scholarly study of the achievements of Picasso and Matisse. The curators who are in charge of "Matisse Picasso" would probably like us to believe that they are operating in the same spirit. Nothing could be further from the truth. Barr and Rubin may have used the star power of Matisse and Picasso to pull people into the museum, but they also believed that museumgoers, if given some direction, could enter into the intricacies of a supreme artist's imagination. The organizers of "Matisse Picasso" just keep bombarding us with star power. The show is all greatest hits and dramatic flourishes. An institution that once took part in shaping our understanding of some of the central achievements of the age no longer sees those achievements as anything but brand-name products. And the branding has become a global affair, since the museum is less and less inclined to attempt to formulate exhibitions on its own. (Some will say that this inhibition is a result of the ever-increasing costs of mounting major shows, but somehow the Metropolitan Museum of Art still finds a way to go it alone, as with its epochal Renaissance tapestry show and now with Leonardo's drawings.) When the Modern does mount shows of classic modern work with its European collaborators, the presentations of Bonnard and Giacometti and now Matisse and Picasso have none of the inspired inevitability that Rubin brought to certain installations of Cézanne and Picasso, installations that even today, decades after the work was taken off the walls, have a lingering emotional impact.

No institution remains the same, and there is no point in complaining that the Museum of Modern Art in which so many of us grew up no longer exists. The problem is not that some of us are nostalgic. The problem is that the museum's most vociferous supporters are so armored in their simplistic assumptions about what the museum stands for that they are incapable of seeing what the museum has become. If you want to judge how far the museum has fallen, just take a look at the contributions to the catalogue by Elderfield and Varnedoe, the two members of the curatorial team who are associated with the Modern. Their writing, with its weird mix of in-your-face newfangled jargon and a sort of neo-belletristic coziness, will startle readers who expect the kind of intellectual and literary clarity that Barr and Rubin brought to the mysteries of modern art. Of course Barr and Rubin made plenty of mistakes: Barr pushed some of the dreariest American realism through much of the 1940s, and Rubin had an obsession with Frank Stella that practically capsized the museum's presentation of contemporary art. But we were far better off with a museum where the challenge of the new involved some misconceived acts of fervor than we are with the Museum of Modern Art of the present, where a curator with an independent voice would no longer last a minute.

"Matisse Picasso" is an impersonation of a Museum of Modern Art exhibition. And yet this ill-focused, undisciplined, and essentially heartless presentation of some of the greatest art of the twentieth century is certain to get the nod from a city that is full of older museumgoers who are eager to relive the great experiences that they once had at the Modern and younger museumgoers who are anxious to make up for the great Modern shows that they missed. And there is another thing that New York, a city of bargain hunters, is going to like about "Matisse Picasso." It is the perfect show for our sagging economy. You get two for the price of one. ■

Anthony Grafton

The Magician

GERSHOM SCHOLEM:
A LIFE IN LETTERS, 1914–1982
Edited and translated by
Anthony David Skinner
(Harvard University Press, 512 pp., $35)

I.

When the Baal Shem Tov had to do something very hard, he went out into the woods, lit a fire, and said a prayer, and the task was done. In the next generation, when his disciple had to do a difficult thing, he also went out into the woods. He could no longer light the fire, but he said the prayer, and that was enough. The next disciple could no longer light the fire or say the prayer, but he could go into the woods, and the thing was done. But in the last generation, the rabbi sat down on his golden throne in his castle and said, "We cannot light the fire, we cannot speak the prayers, we do not know the place; but we can tell the story of how it was done."

S. Y. Agnon told this tale of traditions, colorful and multi-layered as a Russian doll, to Gershom Scholem. The real subject of the story is the slow metamorphosis of rituals and beliefs. The Baal Shem Tov and his followers were Hasidic wonder-workers in two senses. Exemplary figures in the great East European renewal of Judaism, they were also shrewd men who earned their livings by selling amulets that protected against illness and injury. As the generations passed, the rituals that they used for protection in a world of dangers turned into something else: not weapons stored for use in an armory, but treasures displayed under glass in a museum. Words with which magi had torn Promethean fire from the skies turned over time into glowing stories that could be re-told, but not re-enacted. Yet meaning somehow still resided in the commemoration, as well as in the performance, of these rituals of power.

The tale reads like a parable of Scholem's life. By the time he died in 1982, Scholem had become one of the stringent masters of the austere world of humanistic learning. And he achieved this status by telling stories of a lost world of belief and ritual. The pre-eminent historian of the Jewish mystical tradition, Scholem started out, in Berlin and Munich around 1920, by studying the Kabbalah—an ancient mystical tradition that blossomed in the early medieval centuries and reached maturity with the Zohar, in the thirteenth century, and then continued to grow, its schools

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forming central axes of Jewish life and thought, through the early modern period and beyond. He collected rare books, collated manuscripts, and devoted a brilliant dissertation to an early Kabbalistic text called the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. Scholem restored the complex, mutilated text of this influential, much-commented book with a jeweler's attention to detail. The high arts of the German university at its early-twentieth-century acme were mathematics, physics, and philology, and the young Scholem—a gifted mathematician who became a peerless philologist—was clearly one of their dark masters, the deserving recipient of a degree summa cum laude from the Semitic philologists at Munich, whose ignorance of Hebrew and Aramaic aroused his scorn.

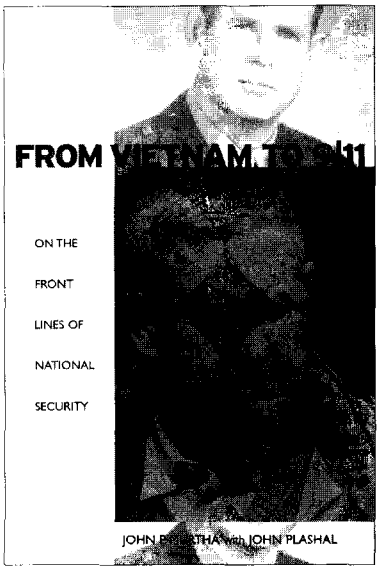
Few understood the young man's interests or felt much sympathy for him. In 1920, he reassured his parents that "the rumor has recently begun to circulate around Munich that, using black magic, I can create mice and elephants. For now, however, I can conjure up only flawless texts no one can top—and that with white magic, which is something completely permissible and free of sorcery!" Yet the rebellious son knew as early as the fall of 1919 what he hoped to do:

> What will become of Gerhard Scholem?
> First, he'll become Gershom Scholem.
> Then he will (hopefully) become
> Dr. Phil.,
> Then a Jewish philosopher,
> Then an angel in Seventh Heaven.

The road that Scholem traveled to this clarity of purpose was short but rocky. A committed Zionist who loathed the moral compromises that he thought inevitable for Jews living in Germany, he rebelled—the word is far too mild, its currency too worn to express the ferocity of Scholem's revolt—as a *Gymnasium* student against his father's desire that he pursue a respectable career. He detested the nationalist wave of enthusiasm for World War I that seized even Martin Buber. Expelled from *Gymnasium*, he found a back way into the university, and avoided military service by shamming insanity. Like his fellow Zionists, he believed that only the Hebrew language and a new Jewish society could save Germany's Jews.

Yet Scholem did not share the disgust that many Zionists felt for the superstitions and the practices of traditional Judaism. Whenever he could, he haunted the sad streets and the tiny study houses in the Jewish quarter in Berlin. The beaten-down neighborhoods that Joseph Roth's all-seeing eye recorded ("No street in the world is as sad.... Rubbish as an object of trade. Old newspapers. Torn stockings. Soles of shoes") were for Scholem a memory palace, one that glowed with the treasures of feeling and tradition that it protected. After 1923, when he finally moved from Berlin to Jerusalem, he settled down between the National Library, where he worked, and the walled Orthodox quarter, Mea Shearim. There he found dusty little bookshops piled with rare Kabbalistic texts, sold by the widows of the impoverished believers who had died in great numbers in Jerusalem during the hungry years of World War I. Scholem cultivated his bibliographical garden intensively, even issuing a list of the rare books that he had not yet managed to buy. He worked in the National Library to build up a manuscript collection, which he catalogued. When the authorities of the fledgling university decided to create an institute for Jewish studies despite the fact that they lacked the money to induce well-known scholars to leave the West for Palestine, Scholem found himself a professor—partly thanks to a letter from a specialist in the botanical knowledge of the rabbis who liked the two pages that Scholem had devoted to the sexuality of palm trees in Kabbalistic tradition.

THE TIMES DID NOT FAVOR A return to the lost sources of Jewish tradition. Already convinced that Jewish life in Germany had no future, Scholem watched in horror from afar as Hitler carried out every dire threat that he had made. One of his brothers, long an active Communist, died in a concentration camp, and the rest of his family found safety only very late, in Australia. An early member of Brit Shalom, the group founded by Judah Magnes, Buber, and others, Scholem lost faith in their pacifism—though he remained a liberal—after the Arab riots of 1929, which came very close to his house. Though he took an active part in building up the Hebrew University, its affairs rarely inspired him with enthusiasm. He denounced as morons not only his students, as all teachers do, but also many of his colleagues. His friendship with Walter Benjamin—who had inspired and provoked him in their youth, and with whom he continued to exchange letters that inspire awe with their profound analyses of texts, places, and traditions—entered a new and bitter key when Benjamin found himself unable to learn Hebrew and unwilling to join Scholem in the safety of Palestine. Scholem could only watch from a distance,



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desperately seeking information, as Benjamin, uprooted from false security in France, went like a sleepwalker to his death in Port Bou.

Despite the times, despite the losses, despite the horrors that he saw when he went back to Europe soon after the war ended to determine the fate of the great libraries of Jewish books, Scholem went about his work. He could not go out into the woods, or light the fires, or say the prayers, but he could see, with a new clarity, how Jews had always found meaning in their own traditions—even those that seemed foolish or meaningless to moderns. And he could tell the story—in Hebrew, in German, and eventually in English. Heinrich Graetz, the great nineteenth-century historian of the Jews, had rejected what he saw as the superstitious elements in Jewish tradition. Like other practitioners of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the scientific study of Judaism, he found himself caught in a basic contradiction. He set out to use the formal tools of German historical scholarship to show "how it had really been"—as Leopold von Ranke famously described the historian's goal. But he had little sympathy for elements of the Jewish tradition that did not fit the values of modern *Bildung*.

Following earlier critical scholars, Graetz studied the Zohar to expose it as a forgery—a text that purported to be the work of the ancient sage Simeon bar Yohai, but was actually composed in the thirteenth century. Scholem came to agree about the text's late date, though the conclusions that he and Isaiah Tishby reached about its origins rested on a new and far more precise analysis of the text's structure, language, and methods. About its historical meaning, however, he disagreed completely with Graetz and the others. The Zohar, he argued, was not a simple, deliberate fake, it was a pseudepigraphic work—the writing of someone who identified so completely with the ancient author in whose name he spoke that he felt no separation between himself and his exemplar. Even falsifications had real meaning when studied in the proper spirit.

The Zohar and other classical Kabbalistic texts, moreover, represented something more than the work of individuals. They were a crossroads where Jewish traditions met. Long before the Kabbalists of Provence began their work, early Jewish mystics contemplated in terror the apocalyptic time that would succeed history, and meditated in awe on Ezekiel's description of the throne of the Creator on its chariot, or its *merkabah*. By the time the Talmud was being compiled, *ma'aseh merkabah*, "the work of the chariot," had become the object of ecstatic contemplation. Following an austere and challenging regimen of self-discipline and spiritual exercise, mystics had experienced an ascent to the heavens and the castles of God himself. These "subterranean traditions" of mystical practices and beliefs, Scholem argued, ran all the way back to the time of the early sects. A profound mysticism formed part of the millennial tradition of Judaism.

Yet the Kabbalah, as it took shape in the Middle Ages, represented something more than a simple revival of older practices. From the first, the anonymous authors of books such as the *Sefer ha-Bahir* and the *Sefer Yetzirah* used mystical and symbolic ideas to understand the Scriptures. These they decoded in what Scholem described as "Gnostic" fashion, finding profound meanings in non-semantic features of the biblical text, and contemplating language as the tool that had brought the universe itself into being. In the world of Kabbalah, mystical symbolism served as a key to the kingdoms of Scripture—a role that it had not played in earlier centuries. Theology and cosmology, mysticism and magic came together in an ever-changing dance. This imaginative use of tradition, in turn, became the model for Scholem's understanding of Judaism as a whole: a continual, active, ever-changing effort to find meanings in tradition, a religion that found in commentary one of its natural forms of expression.

If the medieval and Renaissance Kabbalah proved the deep vitality of scholarship and exegesis, the later false messiahs Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Frank had created another quarter of the sunken city that was the Jewish mystical tradition. These men, and many of their followers, believed that they could redeem the sufferings of the Jews and restore the kingdom of Israel. But they behaved in bizarre and blasphemous ways—most notoriously when Sabbatai Zevi converted to Islam and Jacob Frank told his followers to adopt "the way of Esau" so as to enter the realm of antinomianism and follow Christian rituals in order to reveal the hidden God to the world. In a famous essay called "Redemption Through Sin," Scholem teased out the meanings that these men had read into their violations of the commandments. These transgressions became, in their eyes, the only way to prove their own messianic status and thus bring about the fundamental repair of a broken world. When they spoke the unspeakable name of God, read from printed texts of Torah rather than a scroll, and called women to participate in public ritual, they showed how an aggressive, almost nihilistic approach to law could also constitute a creative response to tradition. Even destruction had its creative side—as it had when

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Gershom Scholem in his library, 1952

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the great Jewish scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the practitioners of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, turned the tools of critical reason on the core documents of their own tradition. Scholem railed against the tendentious old rationalist scholars Leopold Zunz and Moritz Steinschneider, yet he warmly appreciated the honed edge of critical reason that they applied to unsubstantiated beliefs and forged texts, and applied it himself without mercy to the theories of his colleagues and the responses of his critics.

Scholem's bold dive into the *mare magnum* of Jewish tradition thus revealed unsuspected treasures: castles and grottos of endless colorful coral reefs, inhabited by forgotten creatures rich in color and varied in shape; lost galleons laden with treasure; whole sunken cities. With fantastic energy and more fantastic precision, Scholem recorded everything that he found and published everything that he recorded. In a vast series of articles, lectures, and monographs—and in three great books—he made his new maps of tradition available to scholars and others throughout the Western world. The lost cities of the Kabbalah became scenes of life and activity once more.

For all Scholem's severity—the letters in which he cut friends such as Hannah Arendt and Jacob Taubes out of his life have the iron ring of *Carthago delenda est*—he also had the real scholar's ability to inspire the most gifted students. His stern façade imperfectly disguised his perpetual and almost wicked curiosity about what the young might be up to. He could be very rough with students and younger scholars when they deviated from his analysis of text or history, but he insisted that he did not mean to condemn them. No wonder, then, that Scholem was one of the few members of the Hebrew University's generation of giants who did not turn all his students into dwarves. For all their disagreements with their master and with one another, Josef Dan, Moshe Idel, Yehudah Liebes, Peter Schäfer, and a number of others who have carried on Scholem's subtle work of textual archaeology are themselves master humanistic scholars of a type that has never been common and is now painfully rare. Scholem's library, now housed in the National and University Library in Jerusalem, ranks with the world's great forcing houses of creative humanistic research. And the ripples of his work continue to spread—in scholarship on the Christian Renaissance, which his work revolutionized; in new forms of Jewish ritual, many of which he would scarcely have appreciated; even in fiction, since writers from Scholem's friend Agnon onward have found his personality and his discoveries endlessly fascinating.

II.

How, then, to tell Scholem's story, and tease out its meanings, for readers who do not know the worlds he inhabited—worlds almost as alien to the modern reader as the lost ones that Scholem explored? Anthony David Skinner has adopted a traditional, even old-fashioned solution to the problem of preserving a tradition. He has produced a biography in the form of an anthology of letters, with commentary. A knowledgeable and fluent writer, Skinner divides his subject's life into segments. His introductions to these segments show how well he understands Scholem's personal situations and intellectual enterprises. Skinner writes eloquently of what philology meant for Scholem. His translations are clear and generally accurate, and many of the letters that he has selected deal with matters of the highest interest.

Skinner's selections inform us about Scholem's early life in Berlin and allow us to follow his rebellion against his bourgeois family and his turn to Zionism. They also record, in detail, his encounters with two transforming powers: Walter Benjamin, with whom he carried on one of history's most complex, creative, and torturous friendships; and the Kabbalah, to which he devoted his lifetime of research. We watch Gerhard become Gershom. We marvel at Scholem's unwavering sense of vocation—the sense of mastery that enabled him to reject his parents' authority, and that of bourgeois culture and society, years before he had produced anything solid to show that he was more than an angry young man. Anyone interested in Scholem's contacts with American intellectual life, especially Jewish intellectual life, will learn a good deal here about his correspondence with writers, scholars, publishers, and rabbis.

For the work of a learned editor and a great university press, however, this volume is oddly unsatisfactory. It suffers, first of all, from a surprising number of technical flaws. Source indications are scarce. Skinner tells the reader when he has used an existing translation, but when he offers his own versions he does not tell the reader whether the Hebrew or German original can be found in Itta Shedletzky's edition of Scholem's

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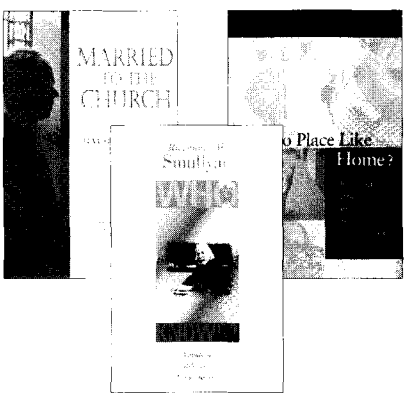

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correspondence, in the standard editions of his correspondence with other individuals, or only in the archives. He claims that he has "added brief footnotes wherever letters allude to obscure people, events, or literary texts" in order to guide readers unfamiliar with the submerged German-Jewish world that Scholem and his correspondents inhabited, but he shows no clear sense of what such readers are likely to know.

Thus Skinner finds it necessary to explain that Mea Shearim is "an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem," but not to identify the fashionable West Berlin streets that Scholem's mother Betty mentions in a letter; to identify Pesach as Passover, but not to translate the Latin phrase *tertium comparationis*. He notes that in the course of a magnificent denunciation of Ernst Bloch, Scholem misquoted the title of the work from which Bloch drew his "wretched misunderstanding of 'the name of God'—*Kiddusch haschem*," but he does not identify the article Bloch drew on (a discussion of Kabbalah that appeared in a 1913 collection of works by members of a Jewish society in Prague, Bar Kochba), or translate *Kiddusch haschem* ("sanctification of the name"), or explain the point at issue.

When Scholem asks his mother to provide as his New Year's gift in 1928–1929 "the Strack-Billerbeck commentary to the New Testament, *volume 3*," Skinner adds not a word—as if all of his readers would immediately recognize that celebrated work of Christian Hebraist New Testament scholarship. And when Scholem writes home from Munich in July 1946 that "the whole Hebraica collection of the Municipal Library" in Frankfurt had burned in an air raid on March 16, 1944, but "the Judaica and Hebraica have been saved," Skinner does not help the reader bewildered by the apparent contradiction. (A document printed by Shedletzky shows that there were two collections; the Hebraica was destroyed, while the Judaica was saved.) Skinner's translations, though fluent and fairly idiomatic, are marred by the occurrence of anachronistic terms and phrases (like the "pantyhose" mentioned in a letter from Scholem's mother) and occasional awkward renderings (when Scholem reproaches

Greetings from Angelus

(Paul Klee, "Angelus Novus")
To W.B., on July 15, 1921

I hang nobly on the wall
and look no one in the eye
I've been sent from heaven
An angelman am I.

Man is well within my realm
I take little interest in his case
I am protected by the Almighty
and have no need of any face.

The world from which I come
is measured, deep and clear
what keeps me of a piece
is a wonder, so it here appears.

In my heart stands the town
where God sent me to dwell.
The angel who bears this seal
Falls not beneath its spell.

My wing is poised to beat
but I would gladly return home
were I to stay to the end of days
I would still be this forlorn.

My gaze is never vacant
my eye pitchdark and full
I know what I must announce
and many other things as well.

I am an unsymbolic thing
what I am I mean
you turn the magic ring in vain
there is no sense to me.

The Sirens

(September 1947)

These are days when seeing your life
resume its normal placid course,
you hear their unexpected cry
arise in lamentation, deep and hoarse,

which, before reaching its highest pitch,
gusts forth like a wild spring wind;
and suddenly all the streets are thick
with the interminable sound of groans

whose unrelenting ups and downs
heave you high onto steep waves
of terror, then plunge you to the ground
until your soul, ripped apart, caves

in. But then all the silence
within the echo of these shrieks
erupts, and your will goes weak,
stunned by the horror of such stillness.

Falling mute, they reduce you to a cower,
as if covering you with blows,
until one final monotonous moan
at last releases you from their power.

Media in vita

(1930-1933)

I have lost the faith
that brought me to this place.
And in the wake of this forsaking,
night is my surrounding space.

I am uncannily attracted
by the darkness of this defeat;
since I no longer carry any banners,
I'm as honest a man you'll ever meet.

I'm not fighting for any "cause,"
all I'm fighting for now is me,
I stand the loneliest of guards,
it takes courage to see what I see:

I don't know how long I'll hold my own,
keeping watch on the edge of the abyss
in the beckoning prospect of light
sunk into such an enormous pit.

All I know is that I am not free
to decide things for myself.
I could perhaps put on a disguise,
but the world decides everything else.

The world? Or rather that abyss
of nothingness in which the world
appears—
the reflection of that second face
which negates me, without tears.

Jerusalem

(Summer 1948)

Nights, when the sandstone walls, baked
all day, now release their gathered heat
onto the city's fitful summer sleep,
wafting up to where weapons lie in wait,

and where the cool moonlight scours
the distant contours of the mountains,
while bells ring from monastery towers,
chiming in on gunfire from the front,

you sense that all the age-old life pent
up in this city now draws to an end,
and you know: she is now spent,
expended on the Real, and commences

to detach herself from the present.
Poor, dethroned, stark in her nakedness,
She stands there, whom enemies could not
sway,

and is once again what she always was:
a mere memory of a former greatness
and a waiting for the Final Day.

GERSHOM SCHOLEM

—translated by Richard Sieburth

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Arendt for the scorn she manifests toward Zionists, "*der seinerseits aus dem Monde stammt*," Skinner makes him write of "a derision that itself stems from some otherworldly source," a phrase guaranteed to baffle any normal reader).

FLAWS LIKE THESE APPEAR IN any large-scale edition or translation. More problematic are the criteria that guided Skinner's choice of letters to translate. He draws heavily on Scholem's extraordinary correspondence with his mother. Skinner's book includes not only many of Scholem's letters home, but dozens of Betty's descriptions of the difficulties, and then the horrors, of life in Nazi Berlin. These vivid letters—and Scholem's sometimes distant-sounding replies—are gripping, full of human and historical interest. Yet they shed only a limited amount of light on Scholem himself, and virtually none on the scholarly and technical work that formed the central concern of his life.

Sometimes a worryingly sentimental and anachronistic vision of human life and character, one that sees passionate gestures and responses as the core of personality, seems to dictate Skinner's choices of material. In his preface, Skinner inaccurately notes that Scholem's letters contain few "important philosophical formulations. But they do express a great deal of emotion." On the whole, emotion rather than philosophy seems to be what interests this editor. Feelings are what he is looking for. Skinner includes two withering letters in which Scholem disowned his former student Jacob Taubes, but he barely explains the issues—as opposed to a personal incident—that separated the two men. Though he assumes that his reader does not know what Pesach is, Skinner does not explain who Taubes was or why Scholem tolerated this remarkable anarchic Jew less than he tolerated Jacob Frank, much less why the whole exchange deserves mention (and it certainly does) half a century later. Yet some of Scholem's other binding passions—notably his overwhelming, almost erotic desire for books—make surprisingly few appearances, perhaps because they seem less appealing now. In the end, the whole enterprise has something of the air of a talk show: Scholem live, slapping his former friends and embracing his mother and brother while the audience claps. Surely Scholem was the last man who would have wished to see his story told through sentiment and what he would have called *Geschwätz*.

Above all, the book suffers from the narrowness with which its tasks are defined. Scholem's story, after all, is only one of many: the stories of the exile scholars, almost all of them Jews, who grew up in Germany, Austria, France, and Italy during World War I and just after it. They carried out a *translatio studii* without precedent in Western history—one so effective that it lifted the humanities departments of a good many American and British universities, and the offerings of a number of learned presses, above the level of mediocrity for a generation. None of them is easy to tell, at least in modest space and in a modern idiom. The heroes of these stories were indeed wonder-working sages, men and women who performed miracles in their writings and in their classrooms.

The tales of these intellectual giants include dramatic metamorphoses, as writers somehow managed to change not only their addresses but also their languages, and emerged as great writers a second time, masters of a completely different idiom (Arnaldo Momigliano, on a monograph from Oxford on Greek history: "This is the most delightful book about Oxford since *Zuleika Dobson*"). They all involve intricate questions of discipleship. Around each sage there grew circles of students, large or small, mostly American but also Israeli, British, and French. They sat at their teachers' feet, won their love and provoked their fury, and sometimes proved that they could emulate their masters' massive learning and creative energy. Think of the extraordinary cohorts of Renaissance scholars formed by Paul Oskar Kristeller, the art historians trained by Erwin Panofsky, the architectural historians instructed by Richard Krautheimer and Rudolf Wittkower, the historians of the exact sciences taught by Otto Neugebauer—all parallels to the Kabbalistic scholars who studied with Scholem.

To tell these stories, we must find our way back into the labyrinthine sunken worlds of art and learning, music and literature, that their polymathic protagonists inhabited. Every one of them benefited from an education unimaginably more rigorous than ours, read the forgotten classics of literatures whose existence is hardly known to us, burned with rage at the pamphlets of forgotten radical sects—and then used the shining, drop-forged tools that they had mastered in *Gymnasium* and *liceo* and yeshiva to break every rule and to transgress every boundary. Their mental and moral qualities challenge comprehension now—as they often did in their own day. Gullivers in a variety of Lilliputs, the exiles discovered before they even left Europe that they had the right and the duty to embark on unconventional intellectual careers, in the teeth of family opposition, anti-Semitism, inflation, Fascism, Nazism. How did they know? How did they dare? And how will we convey whatever we can learn of their accomplishments intelligibly and attractively to readers to whom the traditions of Jewish and European learning are an unknown country?

III.

THESE QUESTIONS HAVE BECOME more pressing in the last decade and more, as the last survivors of this generation have died and their biographies have begun to appear. But they are hardly new. I have been pondering them, in some sense, ever since I came, as an undergraduate, to the University of Chicago. Students there regularly had the opportunity to see and hear famous émigrés such as Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, and Hans Morgenthau, all of whom taught at the university. Others, such as Peter Gay and Arnaldo Momigliano, came as guest speakers (Momigliano later joined the faculty). But we also learned directly from others, unknown to fame but marked by the same historical experience—such as Christian Mackauer, the extraordinary teacher whose legendary course on the history of Western civilization came as a revelation to me, as it did to so many others. In our age of politically correct gentility, when we call our students by their first names and fear to challenge their beliefs and their tastes, it is hard to convey what an inspiration it could be when a brusque man who called you "Mr. Smith" or "Miss Jones" slapped you down without hesitation or mercy for misinterpreting a line of Homer or Plato. Even then, it seemed hard to connect these individuals and their experiences with the university world we lived in—and in those days the giants still walked among us.

It is never enough, moreover, to tell a single story. These thinkers grew up in the same period, responded to the same texts, and provoked and engaged with one another. Seen in this perspective, Scholem's life is not only an epic of individual achievement, but one chapter in the history of a generation. His letters—if selected and interpreted in a very different way than in Skinner's book—could make this point clearly. Scholem and his generation still saw letters as a moral and literary enterprise of deep seriousness. They offered one another readings of ancient and modern texts, mordant

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commentaries on cities and peoples, sharp responses to new ideas. Benjamin compiled an anthology of letters by "Real Germans" (*Deutsche Menschen*) as a principled response to Nazism. Scholem used letters—or at least the literary form of the letter—to read Arendt the riot act about her failure to appreciate the dialectics of real-world politics in the 1940s and to show the proper love of the Jewish people in the 1960s.

MANY OF SCHOLEM'S LETTERS amounted to partial autobiographies, each of which complemented (and complicated) the others. Including these could have enriched Skinner's account immeasurably. Scholem found the rough path he followed to mastery of the mystical tradition endlessly fascinating, and he wrote of it often to friends, older and younger. As early as 1937, in a beautiful letter to Zalman Schocken, first published by David Biale, he explained that he had not come to the Kabbalah by accident. The writings of a Catholic of the Romantic period, Franz Josef Molitor, had given him "an address where the secret life of Judaism, which I had pondered over in my meditations, seemed once to have dwelt." Molitor saw the Kabbalah as the ancient core of Judaism, a tradition that went back to Adam himself. This view was unhistorical, of course, and the Kabbalistic tradition on which it rested itself had false elements. Still, Molitor had helped Scholem to find his way past the rational philosophy of Maimonides to "something of substance" that lurked in the Kabbalah.

And as Momigliano pointed out long ago, Molitor was far from the only Romantic writer whose ways of talking and thinking about language pervaded Scholem's writings and helped to frame his vision of Jewish tradition. Texts by Hamann and Herder that lay entirely outside the world of Jewish scholarship—texts that any educated German could have read, and many did—played a central role in inducing the young and preternaturally resolute Scholem to give up mathematics and don "the sheep's skin of the philologist." Christians, as Scholem knew, normally see Jews as the followers of Esau and themselves as the followers of Jacob. In this case, however, Christian thinkers helped the Jew to claim his frightening and alien intellectual birthright. An obsolete brand of Christian philology, one that stressed continuity and tradition above all else, provided the keys to kingdoms that the modern philology of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had never unlocked.

Many of Scholem's other letters could serve a similar purpose—could fill in, one area at a time, vital segments of the mental world that he shared with his German (and European) contemporaries, and that have become unknown country to most modern readers. In September 1939—a month when Scholem certainly penned no word that he did not consider deeply serious—he wrote at length to the Zionist leader Berl Katznelson to protest an article that had just appeared in the Jerusalem paper *Davar*. The author, Moshe Ungerfeld, had sharply attacked Karl Kraus—whom he called, in his title, "a tragic figure." The great Viennese writer and critic, Ungerfeld argued, had systematically worked through the writings of German Jews—"except, naturally, for Heine"—to prove that they regularly sinned against the "spirit" of the German language. Ungerfeld denounced both the Viennese anti-Semite and the self-hating Zionists who still admired him.

Scholem pointed out at length that Heine was "the author Kraus hated most. His essay against Heine is almost his most famous piece of writing." He made this point to discredit not Kraus but Ungerfeld—who, he insisted, had picked up not just the wrong end of the stick, but the wrong stick entirely. Ungerfeld had evidently never taken the trouble to read Kraus. By contrast, Scholem wrote, "I know all the volumes of [Kraus's periodical] *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*), and Kraus's books, and I know what is written in them." No contradiction at all was involved, whatever Ungerfeld thought, when Scholem and other Zionists admitted how much Kraus meant to them and quoted him in their own writing. Kraus, after all, had taught Scholem a vital lesson: "he fought with all his strength against the plague of articles that has infected literature and the press. [By reading Kraus] I began to understand that this battle is necessary, even if—as this article of Ungerfeld's proves—we have no chance of winning it."

The Scholem who issued verdicts that admitted no appeal against all those who expressed themselves imprecisely, who misused language, or who wrote from ignorance—that Scholem was not only his own creation. He was also, like so many of his Jewish and non-Jewish contemporaries, a constant reader and disciple of the German language's greatest critic of trite language, imprecise statement, and ideology masked as fact. Scholem knew his Kraus as young American Jews of the same period knew their Mencken—to compare small things with great—and his whole approach to writing and to critical reading was shaped by this experience.

ANOTHER LETTER, ALSO UNtouched by Skinner, affords a deeper kind of enlightenment. In 1971 Scholem wrote to Ernst Gombrich, then the director of the Warburg Institute in London, to thank him for his intellectual biography of Aby Warburg, the Institute's founder. Warburg—like Scholem himself—had set out to find a new way to the meanings of tradition. As Scholem rejected the decorum of cultivated German Jews, Warburg rejected the decorum of German classical scholarship. He insisted that the ancient Greeks had created many images that were not white, or simple, or stately. In images of dancing women and the death of Orpheus, Warburg found an antiquity that moved, hot and quick, in rituals and dances. In the web of strange beliefs and practices, Mesopotamian and Greek, that made up ancient astrology, Warburg recovered an antiquity that was not ethnically pure and Aryan, and that used the tools of science to substantiate the most primitive of beliefs about the connection between the universe and the individual. And in his library in the decorous Hamburg suburb of Eppendorf, he created a unique research tool designed to lead the scholar not just to facts, but to the remains of passion and suffering that might still be encoded, symbolically, in a way of recording a gesture or a dance.

Like Scholem, in other words, Warburg held that the road to lost symbolic truths lay through philology. Like Scholem, he practiced a philology of a peculiar kind, one based on his own passions as a collector (both men wrote their responses to the texts that they pondered into the margins of their books), and one that often found keys to ancient ritual and belief in what others would have dismissed as sources too late to depend on. A modern image by Mantegna or Dürer, Warburg held, might unlock ancient mysteries unknown to the philologists in the classical seminars.

Scholem accepted Gombrich's view—soon to be contested by Edgar Wind, another brilliant émigré—that Warburg had suffered from a pathological inability to complete his major projects. When Gombrich refused to describe in detail Warburg's years of madness at the end of World War I, Scholem wrote sympathetically about the arduous thought that must have gone into this decision. But he also noted that in choosing discretion, Gombrich had omitted "an important dimension" of his

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subject. For Warburg's fascination with symbols had gone far beyond the level of the rational and the logical. "I will never forget," Scholem wrote, "the impression that the uncanny, complex system of color-coding, which marked the transitions between the different disciplines and their connections in the Hamburg library, made on me when I first saw the library in 1927."

Theoretically, the colored bands that appeared on the spines of Warburg's books represented a classification system, designed to show which category, such as "festivals" or "historiography," a book belonged to, and what "good neighbors" a reader would find near it. "But that was merely a pretext," Scholem recalled to Gombrich. "There was a great deal more behind it." Warburg's library—like Scholem's real and imagined libraries of Jewish tradition—was yet another memory palace, yet another system of reefs and shipwrecks illuminated by symbols that glowed deep in the grottos that contained them. Fritz Saxl and Gertrud Bing, who served as Warburg's assistants in Hamburg and became the executors of his intellectual legacy in London, treated him as a meticulous, sober art historian. They did justice to one side of him. But they, and Gombrich, failed to understand the tormented historian of culture, tortured by the conflicts between his conscious and his unconscious attitudes toward astrology. To see Warburg whole, to understand what symbols really meant to him, it might be necessary to open the closed dossiers from his years in the sanatarium at Kreuzlingen.

IN THIS CASE AS ELSEWHERE, Scholem showed his openness to the creative powers of madness and destruction. Scholem felt something like an elective affinity when he visited Warburg's library and heard the man himself speak. He hoped that the library would go to Jerusalem rather than London when Hamburg became untenable, and later, when he visited London, he made it another intellectual home. Bibliography as a science of the spirit; the dialectics of tradition and history, of antiquity and modernity; the functions of the symbol and the meanings of commentary; extreme philology as the scholar's one central task: these were the ideals that inspired Warburg when he recast the history of the Western tradition, and they were the same ideals that Scholem followed when he recast the history of the Jewish tradition. Warburg spent his life hunting the Ariadne thread that could lead him through the labyrinths of tradition. His massive investment in books and images and his meticulous studies in the transmission of images and texts all form part of the larger context in which Scholem's own enterprise took shape—a German-Jewish voyage of discovery into lost realms of symbolism and forgotten structures.

Warburg and his library do not account, of course, for the extraordinary and supremely Jewish phenomenon of Scholem. Neither does Kraus. But a portrait of Scholem should find room for them. It might even find room for other contemporaries of Scholem who spent their lives on similar enterprises. Paul Oskar Kristeller, for example: like Scholem tall and severe, like Scholem a deft and passionate bibliographer, like Scholem one who found in unsuspected places—such as the Neoplatonic commentators on Plato, little respected by the classicists of his generation—the tools that could restore meaning to tradition. And Erwin Panofsky. And non-Jews such as Ernst Robert Curtius. The editors of the Bollingen series of translations, who brought out works by many of these scholars, including Scholem, showed a proper sense of their close connections. A life in letters that emphasized these connections would make clear to "general readers," as well as to scholars, that Scholem never dwelled in the *hortus conclusus* of modern "Judaic" studies (he disliked the term).

Yet even a life configured as a study in scholarship will not capture all of Scholem's mysteries. The old tale of the Baal Shem Tov—as Moshe Idel once pointed out to me—is a tale of gains as well as losses. Each of its protagonists was a magus—a holy man and a healer. Each of them carried out these tasks more efficiently than his predecessors. For each of them achieved the same results while expending less effort. And the final figure in the tale—the rabbi-historian who sits on his golden throne and recalls how these things were done—may well be the most powerful of all. As Agnon put it: "The story which he told had the same effect as the actions of the other three." The tale-teller is not just the melancholy memory artist, soaking in the lukewarm bath of tradition, but a magician in his own right, [one] who conjures up the lost meanings of forgotten tasks and symbols. Gershom Scholem needs to be understood in this sense, too—as tradition's willful, brilliant conjurer, who performed an elusive and absolutely vital magic of his own. ■

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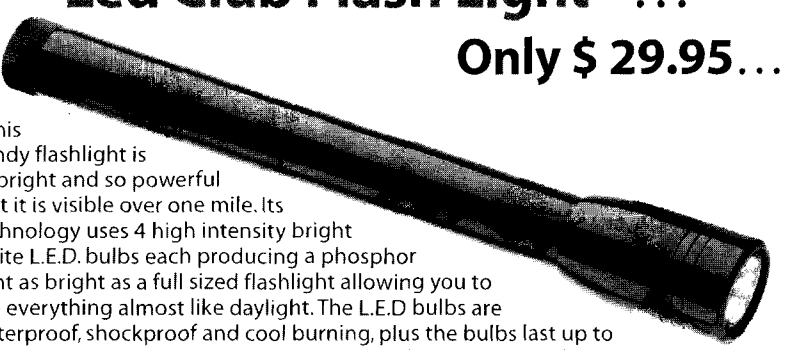

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NEW YORK DIARIST

United We Fall

NOT SINCE THAT LOFTY SPIRITUALIST Dag Hammarskjold has there been a U.N. secretary-general whom the worthy have so taken to their bosoms. A great moral aura attaches to Kofi Annan, even though—as a lesser U.N. official in both bloody Bosnia and bloodier Rwanda—he kept armed multinational forces under his command from impeding the macabre work of mass murderers. But, at the Secretariat, the salient comparisons are to ex-Nazi Kurt Waldheim. So it is not surprising that Annan considers himself the embodiment of all that is virtuous in world affairs. Hammarskjold claimed to "represent the detached element in the international life of the peoples." Annan is not so abstract, but he does annex to his person the interests of everyone. Speaking for "the international community as a whole," he admonishes the United States and its allies that "there is no substitute for the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations Security Council." And so he does not want the American- and British-led alliance to remove Saddam Hussein unless the French, Germans, and Russians assent.

IT'S A STRANGE BUNCH ON WHICH TO RELY for ethical validation. These are the same governments, after all, that for years conspired with Saddam to get the Security Council to abrogate its sanctions against his regime—that is, to rescue him from the legal consequences of the Gulf war formulated by the Security Council itself. And it was their companies that provided Saddam with perilous chemicals, biologics, and maybe even nuclear know-how. It is an intellectual scam for the Security Council and the secretary-general to charge the United States with endangering the United Nations when it is they, through their years of appeasement, who have made the world organization an object of justifiable ridicule.

THERE IS A HISTORICAL RESONANCE here. The United States is also blamed for the collapse of the League of Nations because the Senate refused to ratify Woodrow Wilson's utopian treaty that would have made America a member. But what really destroyed the League was France and Great Britain's failure to resist its aggressor members—Germany, Italy, and Japan. The League did not move when Italy invaded Abyssinia; it hardly reacted when Japan invaded Manchuria; it did not so much as twitch when the treaties guaranteeing the rights of minorities in Slavic and Baltic states were violated. Great Britain finally began to rearm after the Nazis remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936. France, by contrast, never mobilized enough to be in a position to fight at all. Another member of the League, the Soviet Union, negotiated a nonaggression pact with Germany. Belgium declared "absolute neutrality," to no avail. When the Nazis invaded his country, it took King Leopold maybe 20 minutes to surrender. Looking back, it is now clear that the European powers should have combined to deter, or destroy, Hitler long before he invaded Poland and plunged the continent into war. And yet, in Paris and Brussels and Berlin, they have not learned their lessons. By now, Saddam has committed more brutalities against his own population and against minimal world order than Hitler had by, let's say, 1937. Who would still argue today that Europe's response to the Nazis at that date was adequate? Maybe Dominique de Villepin.

I GREW UP WITH SUCH MULTILATERALIST illusions. In my New York City public school, the U.N. flag flew alongside the Stars and Stripes. What was the United Nations? We all knew the answer: "the last best hope for peace." That's what Eleanor Roosevelt said, too. But that was not to be its destiny. In the developing world, its political mission became guaranteeing the unnatural borders and rapacious elites bequeathed by the colonial powers. Thus, when the mostly Christian Ibos of Biafra seceded from mostly Muslim Nigeria and the federal government launched a war of arms and starvation, the United Nations would not even recognize that the conflict had produced refugees. There are never refugees within the borders of a member state because that would undercut the sacred idea of territorial integrity. Again, there are historical lessons. One argument against war with Iraq is that it might alter the frontiers of what is, after all, a geographic contrivance of the European powers. Redrawing Iraq's borders would not be an entirely happy endeavor, but at the United Nations it is deemed the worst of all possible outcomes—worse than Saddam's domestic slaughter, worse than his rush toward nuclear capacity, worse than his menacing of the region.

THE UNITED NATIONS IS A RUBE GOLDBERG contraption. Every state has an equal vote in the General Assembly—India and Bhutan, Brazil and the Comoros Islands. This is the parliament of nations, where lopsided majorities make decisions of absolutely no consequence. Like the U.S. Congress, the General Assembly has committees (in Turtle Bay they call them commissions). The Commission on Human Rights is chaired by Libya. This is not a joke. But it is the Security Council before which really important matters are brought, and the real power resides in its five permanent members, each with the absolute right to veto anything. France is a permanent member because a stiff-necked Charles de Gaulle persuaded a slightly addled Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, who wanted him as an ally against Stalin, to pretend that the French seriously fought the Nazis and, thus, were entitled to shape the new world order. France's postwar power and influence were, in truth, built on the blood and bones of the American men buried in Normandy. And today, in waging his public battle against the British government and ours at the United Nations, Jacques Chirac has already forfeited France's other great pretension: its role as the leading European interlocutor in the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. After the humiliation the French dealt Secretary of State Colin Powell at the United Nations last week, George W. Bush would be mad even to feign listening to Chirac's thoughts. In any case, the European Union hasn't had sway with Israel for decades, and it hasn't even tried to influence the Palestinians. After this next Gulf war, it will be left to Washington, as it always is, to tease out some improvements west of the Jordan.

SO LET FRANCE VETO WHATEVER RESOLUTION Great Britain and the United States present to the Security Council. Then even Kofi Annan will have to admit that it was not the Americans who brought the United Nations to its most humiliating nadir. France will have cast the vote that finally clarifies its own powerlessness. And the United Nations will linger on but, with time and the development of new alliances among responsible states, go the way of the League. The death of another illusion.

MARTIN PERETZ

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The End of Tax and Spend

Jennifer Roback Morse is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Let me start with a disclaimer: I am philosophically a small-government person. So I naturally dislike California governor Gray Davis's $10 billion tax hike. But the Davis plan is bad news, even if you are a big-government person. He claims the state needs a more rational, stable source of revenue. But part of his plan adds to the instability, and the other part is regressive. **California's problems are only the most dramatic among the other states facing budget catastrophes.** Looking at California's crisis can give us an idea of what lies ahead for states across the country.

Davis proposes two major tax increases: (1) personal income tax increases for the top earners of $2.58 billion and (2) a sales tax increase to generate $4.58 billion. The sales tax hike is regressive. The personal income tax increases are progressive but add to revenue instability.

California's tax revenue has been volatile because the incomes of the rich have been unstable. The state treasury did well during the dot-com boom of the nineties, collecting an unprecedented $45 billion in revenue from personal income taxes in the fiscal year 2000–2001. The next year, treasury receipts crashed right along with the stock market.

If government is going to take an activist role in health and welfare, of course, it needs a reliable source of revenue. The "safety net" ought to be safe.

But as things stand, the state is vulnerable to the fortunes of the rich because the rich pay most of the taxes. The top 11 percent of taxpayers reported 54 percent of the total income in the state and paid 80 percent of the personal income taxes. Usually, liberal Democrats call attention to the overwhelming percentage of personal income earned by only a handful of people. Republicans and Libertarians are left to observe that the same handful of people pay the lion's share of the taxes.

So it was a bit surprising to see Governor Davis crying crocodile tears over the rich paying the majority of taxes while discussing his plan to balance the state's budget. We can hardly believe that Davis is about to create a tax benefit for Jerry Yang, Barbra Streisand, Larry Ellison, and all the other rich people who fund the state treasury.

No, indeed. The "we need a more stable source of revenue" rhetoric is designed to soften us up for the sales tax increase, which is a massive tax increase on the poor and middle class. **The Davis plan is tax increases for the poor to fund programs to help the poor, which doesn't add up.**

The Davis budget fiasco illustrates that the real issue is the size and function of government. If government is to help the poor, it can't do everything else too.

By taxing rich people, the government hitches its wagon to their star. If the rich flourish, the government can be flush with revenue. If the rich fail, so does the government. The alternative to taxing the rich is to tax everybody. California is at the end of the tax-and-spend road.

— *Jennifer Roback Morse*

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